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No. 113.

AN ECHO.

BY FRANK M. IMBIE.

'Neath the wide-spreading arms of an old shade tree
I rested, a-weary, my mind roving free,
Methought I would woo a fair sprite of the wood,
And trust to its magic to soothe my sad mood.
I said, "In this beautiful world so bright,
Why walk we in gloom through its marvelous light?
What's lacking of pleasure our spirits to cheer?
Where can happiness be, if we find it not here?"
The wild eldritch echo responded: "Not here."

"Dear eyes have grown heavy with wearisome
Cares,
'Loved forms are gone,' say the old vacant chairs;
We crossed their pale hands on the poor pulseless
breast.
While the Comforter whispered, 'A soul is at rest,'
In our hearts, joy-deserted, we folded the pall,
And the cypress hangs fadless on Memory's wall.
'Tis a sweet peace to know when life is so dreary,
That in the new life, they never grow weary,
Finally the echo spoke, "Never grow weary."

"They tell us, so oft, of that jasper-gemmed shore,
We reach by the dip of the mystical oar;
The gold-paved streets of the valed 'Afar,'
Enraptured we'll see through the gates ajar;
We will meet again with our loved ones lost,
Whom we left at the edge when their life-boat
crossed;
They wait for us on the shining stair:
Oh, tell us, is bliss unalloyed, over there?"
Filled with sweet peace came the words, "Over
there."

Hercules, the Hunchback: The Fire-Fiends of Chicago.

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.
AUTHOR OF "FLAMING TALESMAN," "HOODWINKED,"
"BLACK CRESCENT," "BLACK HAND," ETC.

CHAPTER X. AFTER AN ENEMY.

HEMMELED in on every side by the licking
fires that spat upon them as if with a devil-
ish glee; weakened of heart by the demoniac
voice that issued through the flames above;
nigh filled with despair at finding the door
—their only hope—fastened, Hercules
groaned aloud and in spirit, and, setting
Mortimer Gascon on his feet, he pressed
his burned and blistered hands to his throbbing
temples.

The heat was terrible. Denser with the
lapse of every second closed the seething
walls around them; death seemed inevitable.
But the indomitable nature of the Hunch-
back was not yet conquered.

"Courage!" he hissed, with a stifled
breath. "Courage, Mortimer Gascon; we
are not dead yet—God! how hot! Bear
up! Bear up!"

Stripping the coat from his back, he threw
it around the invalid's head.

"Wrap your face tightly!" he managed
to articulate; "pull it close, for your life!"
Then, as if gifted with a fresh energy, he
drew off a pace or two—suddenly casting
himself, with a battering plunge, against the
door.

The panel cracked. Again and again he
threw himself forward, his dwarfed, yet
Herculean form, striking the door with an
almost resistless force.

Presently, the panel yawned. Round the
small opening clinched those fingers of iron,
with muscles of steel and giant strength.

Crack! Crack! gave the stuff in his
maddened grip.

And there was another cracking sound, a
sound as of a dull explosion mingled with
the strain of weighty timbers.

"The roof!" moaned Gascon. "It is
falling in! The walls are tottering!"

Hercules uttered a sharp, yelping cry, and
tugged and wrenched at the opening with a
desperate fury.

"Stand fast!" he gasped.

He hurried himself through at last; then
turned to his companion and dragged the
weak form after him.

By a miracle, the back of the house was
not yet consumed in the raging element;
an avenue of escape—though dangerous—
lay open; and panting in the heated atmos-
phere, the dwarf once more took him in his
arms, and staggered away.

None too soon. With a roaring crash,
like rattling musketry, the building fell,
shooting a tower of cindered flame high
into the air, and rolling a cloud of sparks
on! in the hurrying gale, to aid the
Fire Fiend at his hellish work.

At the same moment Hercules effected his
escape at the rear of the burning building.
There was a loud jingle of breaking glass
at the front as the Indian boy, Trix, cast
himself out of one of the second-story win-
dows.

It was like the apparition of a demon, as
he shot from the glowing mass, and de-
scended with terrific velocity to the street
below.

But he struck without so much as sprain-
ing an ankle, and, uttering a shrill scream,
darted off with clothes ablaze, and swing-
ing his arms wildly.

"Thank God! we are saved!" exclaimed
Gascon, as he and the dwarf got further
and further from danger.

"Not saved yet, Mortimer Gascon! The
fire is close on us!—and I am weakening.
But, courage! When I cry 'enough,' then
we'll say our prayers and die!—and I shall
never cry that word!"

He was making for the house of Lu, the
negress.

After a severe struggle with his overtaxed
nerves, he finally reached the goal.

Reeling in, as we have seen, he dropped
his burden, and sunk forward on his knees,
completely exhausted.

So wild and disfigured, ay, hideous, was



"Ha! h-a-a! found! Let Delia Rivers look to herself! My hour of triumph is at hand!"

his face, that the negress did not, at first,
recognize him.

But then she cried out, in amazement:
"What's this?—Hurl!"

"It is what is left of him!" he broke in,
half madly. "See us! we are nearly burned
to ashes!"

Then, for the first time, the murmuring
tumult of the night attracted her.

"What is it?" she asked. "What's all
that noise about?"

"Noise! Where have you been? Been
asleep? Are you deaf?—blind?—that you
ask me what it means? The whole city is
being swept away! The earth is ablaze
from end to end! Look there!" point-
ing to the window.

She hastened to glance out. A quick-
breathed exclamation escaped her as she
saw the lurid glare, the hurrying people,
flying panic-stricken—heard a moaning rum-
ble, as if the thunders of heaven were belch-
ing hoarsely in the distance.

But, paramount in her thoughts was little
Carl. She turned to the Hunchback with a
half-cry, half-wail.

"Hurl!—the boy!—the boy!"

"What mean you?" quickly.

"He's gone!"

"Gone!"

"They carried him off!"

"They! Who? Speak out—has any
thing befallen the child?"

"I tell you he's gone!—they carried him
off!"

"And I ask who 'they' are? Will you
answer?"

"Jose Moreno and Miguel, his follower!"

"No!"

"I tell you yes!" she screamed.

"They here? Impossible!" and he stared
in astonishment.

"Yes, they are here! They've got the
boy! They've got Carl! They'll kill him!"

Hercules was on his feet in an instant.

A new strength came to him. The intel-
ligence appeared to rouse him to a state of
frenzy, for, while his eyes fairly danced, he
cried out:

"Which way? Set me on their track!
Be quick!—they'll murder him!"

The negress indicated the window,
through which she had seen Miguel make
his exit.

The dwarf sprang to the pursuit. There
was a ferocious gleam in his evil eyes, and
his white, regular teeth began to grit and
grind till they seemed to be pulverizing.

He reached the street just as Miguel
overturned the diminutive man with the
carpet-bag.

Muttering an oath of savage frame, he
dashed after the Spaniard, soon leading in
the race with those who would have
punished Miguel for his rude treatment of
the girl.

He had recognized an old enemy, a man
he hated, and upon whom he had sworn to
 wreak a terrible vengeance.

To Jose Moreno, and his companion, the
bully, Hercules owed that ugly scar on his
temple; and now, mad as a bloodhound on
the scent of a doomed game, he glided at
a pace of incredible swiftness—his face
darkly grim, and his hands working as if
they were already throttling the object of
his hatred.

He saw something in Miguel's arms—
thought it must be the child; and this lent
a double vigor to his pursuit.

Miguel ran fast. Behind him came the
small man whose carpet-bag he had stolen,
speeding after his property, and gaining
rapidly.

And on pressed Hercules, his dwarfed
body appearing even smaller as he bent to
the trial of wind and muscle, and flew
ahead with the leaps of a race-horse.

"Go it! Go it!" vociferated the man of
the carpet-bag, as the Hunchback passed
him; "catch him! He's got my clothes! Lord!
how that fellow runs! Bet a dollar
he's got gum elastic tied to his heels!"

Hercules swept by, as if on the wings of
the wind.

Soon the three men left the other parties
to the scene far in their rear, and these,
having more urgent affairs of their own to
look after, in the excitement of flight be-
fore the conflagration, drew off.

The Spaniard was making for the tunnel,
having crossed Adams street bridge.

Presently he cast a hurried glance over
his shoulder. Then he paled, for he saw
the form of the Hunchback, knew who it
was, and a cowardly fear seized his ruffian
heart.

"Devils of earth!" he gasped, in terror;
"if he once lays hold upon me, I am a dead
man! How came he at my heels? And the
captain has deserted me! I shall be
murdered!" He put his severest bottom to
the test, as he sought to escape that dreaded
enemy in his rear.

Another glance back; another weak-
ening tremor in the limbs that he worked to
their utmost strain.

"Dios! he is gaining on me!"

Faster, faster ran Miguel.

But the Hunchback came whizzing on.
Not all his fatigue, his tortuous condition
after having passed the ordeals of our pre-
vious chapters, could deter him now; nor
could Miguel—though he tried his best—
prevent the steady closing up of the space
which intervened between him and the
man he had good cause to fear.

CHAPTER XI.

A PRIZE FOUND AND LOST.

WHILE Evard Greville had been engaged
with Jose Moreno, in the room at the rear
of the house, Hermoine had returned to
consciousness.

But her return to life was even worse
than death—at least, it was no better.

The horrible operation performed by the
Hunchback—which, as part of the price
demanded for the removal of Mortimer Gas-
con, we know was at the instigation of
Zone—had so worked upon her nerves, that
the brain was shocked, and Reason forced
from its throne.

As she sat upright on the lounge, she
heard voices not far off, and, with an in-
stinctive curiosity, followed in the direction
of the sound, tiptoeing stealthily, and paus-
ing, anon, to listen.

Then there was a cessation of the dia-
logue; she detected the approach of some
one, and shrunk back into a niche that was
purposed for statuary.

A figure brushed by her, treading with a
noiseless step.

The maniac followed. As Jose passed
out at the front door, it was her laugh, so
wild and strange, that had startled him, and
caused him to quicken his departure.

After a few moments, she caught the
sound of footsteps in the hall above, and
fled silently to the garden.

While Evard Greville searched for her,
she was hiding in an arbor, laughing to her-
self as he called her name.

When he returned, after a long absence,
accompanied by Zone, she was watching
them from the shade of the opposite parlor
—her eyes glowing like the orbs of an ani-
mal, as she gazed upon the masked girl.

But she did not betray herself—stood mo-
tionless and attentive to all that passed, and
Greville's avowal of devotion seemed par-
ticularly to interest her.

As soon as he left the house, for the se-
cond time, she procured another key, and
unlocked the parlor door—to confront one
who evidently held a secret regarding her;
for Zone's immediate exclamation, as the
maniac faced her, discovered the fact of
this knowledge.

As Hermoine moved away, beckoning
Zone to follow, the latter stood as if riveted
by an irresistible magnetism, gazing vacan-
tly at the spot where she had stood in the
doorway. And in her mind trained these
exclamatory thoughts:

"This is Delia Rivers!—the woman I
have cause to hate with all my heart! She
robbed me of my rights—my all; destroyed
my beauty, and sought my life! But for
my mask, she might have recognized me—
though she is crazy, and it has been long
since we stood face to face. The last time
we met—No matter. What shall I do?
The record—I must have it. But she will
watch me now."

She raised her hand to her bosom, where
it clasped the pearl hilt of a keen-edged
poniard; and beneath the black mask there
was a stern, resolute expression of fea-
ture.

"Let her watch me, then!" she added,
half-aloud. "I'll make more disfigurement
in her, if she dares too much. O-h! how I
hate her!"

With a firm, yet silent step she glided
out of the parlor.

But she paused, and returned for one of
the fancy lamps that stood on the mantel-
piece; for the entry was dark and ominous.
Then she started again, waving the light
before her.

Hermoine had disappeared.

Slowly she ascended the stairs. She
glanced into the rooms on the second floor.
Every thing was still within the house.

"Not here. If there is a desk, as Lu said
there was, it must be in his library. Where
is the library?"

She continued into the back building, oc-
casionally pausing as she went, looking be-
hind, to see if she was dogged.

Though she saw no one, there was a pair
of burning eyes fixed upon her, a pursuing
form flitted, shadow-like, beyond the reach
of the lamp-rays.

Hermoine was noting her every move-
ment.

Soon Zone found what she sought—the
library; and there, at one side, was a tower-
ing desk of antique finish, combined with a
dusty-fronted bookcase.

"Found!" fell whisperingly from her lips.
"It must be here!"

Setting the lamp on a table, she turned to
the desk. Drawer after drawer was drawn
out, and rummaged by those red-gloved fin-
gers; a pile of papers lay scattered around
her; still she did not discover what she
wanted.

Then to a row of pigeon-holes in the far
interior—pulling out successively the nu-
merous cobwebbed files, and glancing over
them with excited eagerness.

And all the while, outside the door, the
maniac was intently watching her. While
Zone was rapt, oblivious to all else than
her search for the article so coveted, Her-
moine slipped in, without so much as the
rustle of a garment.

She advanced a step, paused, leaned for-
ward with stretched neck, to see what the
other was doing—then another step, a se-
cond pause, while her face wore a look part
vacant, part of inquiry.

Presently, Zone uttered a half-suppressed
cry.

She had found the parchment tied with a
black ribbon, sealed with a black seal.

"I have it! I have it! Now tremble,
Delia Rivers! Ha! ha! ha! At last! At
last the game is mine!"

With a trembling hand she broke the seal
and tore open the document. Instantly a
laugh of wild joy burst from her lips; and
when she had mastered her excitement
somewhat, she read the heading to the
parliament:

"Last Will and Testament of John Lisle."

The other MS. was a record of some kind.
"Ha! h-a-a! found! Let Delia Rivers
look to herself! My triumph is at hand!
I—!" She stopped short; the words died in
a quick gasp.

A light weight lay on her shoulder. Her-
moine stood beside her.

As she looked up, she started back. Rap-
id as thought, the poniard leaped, glisten-
ing, to her hand.

But Hermoine only regarded her steadily,
without moving.

"What's it all about?" asked that low,
melodious voice, after a brief silence, during
which space the orbs in the mask were fair-
ly scintillating. "Tell me what you mean?
You said Delia Rivers, didn't you? Let-
me—see—yes, I used to hear that name

somewhere. Ha! ha! ha! isn't it queer? You lost something? How did you lose it here? How did it come here?—I never saw you before."

A strong emotion—one fraught with bitterest sentiment toward Hermoine Greville—held Zone silent. At that moment might words of taunting triumph could come from her lips; her triumph was over Hermoine. To speak would be to sting the man; and in that case, perhaps she was not yet safe in her rejoicing, even though she held the prize in one hand, and a gleaming weapon in the other, with which to defend herself.

Hermoine frowned.

"Won't you tell me? Come, you'd better. I'm queen here; and if you don't tell me, I'll have you put back into prison. When he comes, he'll condemn you, if I tell him to. He loves me, and will do whatever I ask. And I love him, too. I am not his sister; so we'll be married, some day. Do you love him? If I thought you did, I'd kill you! Ha! ha! stop!—stop there!"

Zone had wheeled suddenly, and was about to run from the room.

But the maniac was too quick for her—catching her by the dress, and ere she could endeavor to prevent it, or deal a blow with the sharp poniard, had snatched away the valuable papers.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Hermoine, mockingly. "You've had your hunt for nothing. I've got your prize!—I've got it! And I'm going to find out what it all means, too! Ha! ha! ha!"

With a scream of anger, Zone sprung toward her.

But she vanished in the darkness of the entry, flourishing the papers aloft.

In the same moment a noise at the open window drew Zone's attention.

A large shade tree grew outside, extending its luxuriant branches close to the house. On one of the foliage boughs was a man, with eyes fixed full upon her.

As she saw him, she uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Heaven! Can the grave give up its dead? It is Evard Greville—the true Evard Greville!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE ENCOUNTER IN THE TUNNEL.

As Jose Moreno pressed onward with the fugitives that were flying through the tunnel, his dark countenance wrinkled in a smile—a devilish smile—his snaky eyes shone with a hard glitter, and his white teeth glistened between the parted lips, as he hissed those intimidating words into the ears of the frightened child:

"Be still, or I shall kill you!"

And then he muttered, jubilantly, to himself:

"Oho! a prize! a prize! What will Carl Grand say when I tell him that the heir of Nelson Greville still lives? Admirable fate! So, you'll bribe Jose Moreno to aid in your plots, and then seek to rid yourself of him? Mad! what a mistake. How un-considerate, when it was not intended that Jose should die an unnatural death! Ha! ha! a prize! But where can Miguel be? Curse the fellow! he has no brains at all, and is ever making trouble for himself. Can he—The devil!"

As he vented the closing exclamation to his mutterings, he stopped short, and gazed in astonishment on a man before him.

It was Evard Greville.

At that juncture there seemed to be a break in the fleeing crowd. No one was near.

The two men eyed each other with all the hot emotions of enmity and deep-set hate contorting their faces.

Jose was first to speak.

"So," he said, sneeringly, "we are met again, Carl Grand!"

"Jose Moreno?"

"Yes, it is he—at your service for a duel to the death. If you wish it. You did not kill me, after all, most generous employer!"

Evard purpled. One hand slid to his pistol-pocket, and fingered the revolver he carried there.

Jose noted the movement. In a trice he was covering his enemy with the muzzle of a similar weapon, while he said, threateningly:

"One little motion, Carl Grand—just a little—and you die! You know I am one to keep my word!"

Then Evard's attention was attracted to the child. At first glance he started; then he whitened, drew one hand across his brow as if he doubted his vision.

"What is that?" he cried. "Who?"

"A-h! you look frightened. Don't you know who it is? Your memory is bad. You forget faces! Study closer—it is Carl Greville, heir of Nelson Greville!"

"You lie!"

"Oh, no; I never tell lies. You did not kill him, either. The devil is against you; and so is Jose Moreno. Can you fight Jose Moreno and the devil? Ha!—take care! If you draw that pistol, I shall certainly shoot you!"

Just then came a cry from behind Jose—a yell, half-scream.

"Captain! captain!" shouted the voice.

"Save me! Satan is at my heels! Help! or I shall be murdered!"

Jose knew it was Miguel. But he was not "green"; he did not turn to see the cause of the disturbance, though the appeal for aid and the pattering of feet told him that his follower was in difficulty.

And it was fortunate for him that he did not look around for, in one second, Greville would have shot him.

"Captain, help!" shouted Miguel, again.

Then there was another cry—from the lips of the Hunchback. He had recognized Jose. Both of his hated enemies were now before him; and the fury of a demon warned his veins, as he dashed on, close upon Miguel.

The voice of Hercules proved too much for even the schooled nerves of Jose Moreno. He knew who it was; he was thrown off his guard; he wheeled to save himself from one whom he feared far more than Evard Greville.

Crack! went Greville's pistol.

Jose staggered to his knees, and ere he could recover himself, little Carl was torn from his arms.

But, he still held the revolver.

As Miguel came up, panting and snorting in terror, the wounded man raised his weapon and fired at the pursuing form.

Hercules reeled, for the ball grazed his temple, and stung like fire. Miguel, with unerring aim, sent the carpet-bag whizzing into the face of his foe.

The Hunchback fell, and over him tripped the small man, who sprawled full length. In a moment he was writhing under the grip of the dwarf, who, half-

stunned, half-blind, supposed him to be one of the Spaniards; and the iron fingers closed in a deadly hold around the throat of the struggling captive.

"Say! Say! Hold on!—no, I mean let go! Murder! You've made a mistake! Lord! you'll strang—*arg—murder!*" squealed the diminutive humanity, as he wriggled and squirmed like an eel on a hook.

"A curse upon you!" snarled the Hunchback, as he released the man, and tottered to his feet.

But, Jose and Miguel had disappeared—Greville and the boy had disappeared.

The break in the crowd now filled up; again the fugitives of the night were hurrying through the tunnel.

Hercules strode on to the west entrance, where he glanced on every side, in vain, for a sight of the two villains. Then he retraced his steps, angry and gloomy in his discontent.

A slim shadow, closely hugging the wall, watched him till he was lost to view, finally moving away in the direction of the west opening, tightly grasping a carpet bag, and smiling with satisfaction.

Hercules suddenly remembered that he had left Mortimer Gascon in peril. The fire was marching northward; he saw that, with the heavy gale blowing, nothing could save that portion of the city which lay directly in the front of the flames.

The high, roaring sheet of red, which was rapidly devouring block after block, was now eating into the fat heart of a proud city—plunging its brands of ruin and desolation on! on! with a sweeping ferocity no effort of man could resist.

The home of the negress was already enveloped.

He quickened his pace. But it was a useless walk; he was soon forced to pause.

The engines were driven from their posts; the heroic firemen, worn and desperate, were beaten back, back, as the seething vortex of destruction hurled itself upon their stands, seeming to swallow in huge gulfs, all that came in its way—bursting doors, shivering windows, toppling down noble edifices—nothing could endure, every thing must perish.

And the Hunchback looked anxiously ahead, then around among the fleeing multitude, for a sign of the negress; for he knew she must be driven from her house, and an uneasiness for the safety of Mortimer Gascon possessed him.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 110.)

Madeleine's Marriage:

OR,
THE HEIR OF BROADHURST.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLET.

AUTHOR OF "UNDER THE CLOUD."

CHAPTER XIX.

DANGER, AND A PLAN OF ESCAPE.

As the door closed behind the girl, the gentleman turned toward his wife. She had seated herself, and was striving to regain her composure. He took a seat at some little distance.

"I can understand all this, madam," he said, after a few moments' silence. "You have been weak enough to encourage the pretensions of a young man with whom I have not even a slight acquaintance."

Madeleine made no reply.

"You must have understood, Mrs. Clermont, from the time—two months since—that you communicated to me what you called your daughter's engagement, that the projected marriage met with my disapprobation."

"And why, sir, should you disapprove of it?"

"Because I feel an interest in her welfare; because I consider it my duty to oppose the errors into which your obstinacy might lead you; the evil result of which could only be counteracted by my prudence."

"Your prudence!" repeated Madeleine, scornfully.

"You speak as if you doubted my possession of that quality, madam."

"How can I, when you have shown it in your own affairs?"

"May I beg you to explain?"

"In the drawing up of the agreement between us."

"You mean the agreement of separation that preceded our marriage?"

The lady bowed in assent.

"By which I was to have the estate in case of your death without heirs! I trust you will remember, madam, that I asked no more in that, than the law would give me as nearest of kin!"

"That contract," replied the lady, "expressly stated 'in the event of Oriel's death.' I am not certain that mine was mentioned."

"But it was understood, of course, and stipulated, too. I could not legally inherit while you lived."

"Be that as it may, I did not hesitate to sign the agreement, because, if aught happened to deprive me of my child, I knew all worldly possessions would be indifferent to me. Although I expected nothing from your proposed regard and respect for myself, I did hope for some tenderness for the young creature dependent in a measure on your nominal protection, when she should reach the age that required it. But, instead of that, sir, you have seemed to look upon my daughter with positive hate."

"You were mistaken, madam," replied the gentleman, his lips parting so as to display teeth whose whiteness glared in contrast to his dark mustache, "as to my feelings toward Oriel. On the contrary, I am anxious for her welfare. For this reason I objected to the alliance you proposed for her."

"You did not state any objection."

"My silence might have shown you that I did object. Now, at some inconvenience, I have come to inform you that it does not suit me to allow my stepdaughter to bestow her hand on the first unknown young fellow who thinks proper to solicit it."

"This 'unknown young fellow' is the son of Colonel Duclos, an officer of merit?"

"Indeed! It is strange I never heard of him."

"I told you, sir, many years ago, when the dreadful tragedy occurred—when Lewis—when my child's father and Duclos, his unhappy companion, were murdered on the coast."

The poor woman could never refer to that fearful occurrence without a shiver of horror through her whole frame. It was some minutes before she recovered her self-control.

"Does it not strike you," she resumed, "that there is something providential in the

union of those two children, whose fathers perished together?"

"Highly romantic, no doubt," replied Marlitt, caressing his mustache; "but, unfortunately, out of the question; inasmuch as I have another match in view for my stepdaughter."

Madeleine looked at him in astonishment.

"The suitor I favor," he continued, "is the son of a wealthy diplomatist, and is engaged in the financial department of the office."

"And so, sir, after so many years of indifference and neglect, you suddenly remember you are Oriel's stepfather, because it suits your interest to sacrifice her by some ambitious marriage; or one, perhaps, that will promote *your* interest!"

"You are right, madam; it will be a capital thing for my interest."

"You would sell her, then! But it shall not be! She shall marry Frank Duclos."

"She shall *not*!"

"She shall marry him, because her happiness—nay, her life—depends upon it! My own life has been a wreck, because I foolishly hoped to find happiness in wealth and station; my daughter shall be saved! Yes—I repeat it—this marriage shall take place—were I to meet my death in the struggle with you!"

Madeleine had risen, and supported herself by the back of her seat. Her eyes were fixed on her persecutor with a look of proud determination.

"You are disposed to be resolute, madam. But you forget that your daughter is under age, and that, as her guardian, I can prevent a marriage I dislike, even if I can not compel her to one I approve."

"I do not admit, sir, that you have any authority over either myself or my daughter."

"I have all the authority which the law invests me, which I have not voluntarily surrendered."

"The contract—"

"Guarantees no power to you in this matter. You will find that my authority can be enforced."

"It can not be," cried Madeleine, passionately, "that such power can belong to one who has been a husband and father but in name; who has never given my child the slightest protection! I defy you, sir! You can have no legal claim on her obedience!"

"You will find that I have! and I shall take care to make it available. I wish now to speak with Oriel."

"She is engaged, sir."

"Why is it your wish to prevent an interview? If she prove intractable, she may, indeed, have reason to fear me; but I am confident I shall succeed in convincing her that obedience is her best policy."

Madeleine was struggling to control her feelings. She had a great fear of this man; and would have sacrificed her own life to shield her daughter.

As she saw him move toward the bell, she intercepted him.

"What do you wish, Mr. Clermont?"

"To send word to Oriel that I wish to speak with her."

"It will be of no use; she will not yield in this matter."

"We shall see."

"Oh, sir, spare her the misery—the shame of this contention! Let my sufferings content you! Let my child be happy!"

"I mean to make her so, by a union suited to her condition."

"I have never asked a favor of you, sir! Grant me this one! Stay: I will buy it of you! What is the price you require to allow her to remain in peace?"

"Allow me to ring, madam," rejoined the gentleman, endeavoring to pass her.

"You shall not distress Oriel!" cried the lady, passionately. "I am the mistress of this house! Your message shall not be taken to her; I will forbid it."

Jasper smiled. "If you are the mistress of the house," he said, "I will let it be known that I am *your* master! Please to stand aside!"

Madeleine had resolved, when the servant came, to forbid him to carry the message; but, before her husband could reach the bell, the door was opened, and the footman brought in a note which he presented to the gentleman.

"Say I will be at his house directly," was his reply.

The servant disappeared, and was quickly followed by his mistress, who was anxious to warn her daughter. Marlitt's lip curled as he saw her depart in such haste.

"No further occasion for prolonging the interview, she thinks! Well, I am glad the explanation is over. I must manage to persuade or intimidate Oriel into this marriage. If I can not, I am ruined! I have let things go on too long. I must make up the sum in ten days, or disgrace and a prison are before me! Now for the Jew. He must not be seen in this house!"

He was leaning against the mantel in deep thought, when Julius again entered the room.

"Has the man gone?" the master asked, looking up.

"Yes, sir. He said he should expect you."

"Very well; now attend to me. If Mr. Duclos should call, he is on no account to be admitted."

"I will see to it, sir," replied the man, a smile lurking in the corners of his mouth.

"You shall be well rewarded, if he is kept from visiting here. Remember, these are my orders."

"Shall you dine at home, sir?" asked the footman, as his master was leaving the room.

No attention was paid to the question. When the door had closed behind him, Julius exclaimed:

"All right, sir; I am not going to let in Mr. Frank; for he is already in the house, and has been for half an hour! Fond lovers and flinty-hearted fathers! Let me put it down on my notes, how it is. It will be an item for the Jew."

Meanwhile the alarmed mother had joined the lovers in the boudoir.

It was a small, but luxuriously-furnished apartment, opening into a miniature conservatory, where a fountain flashed in the sun, its basin filled with goldfish and delicate aquatic plants and shells. Oriel was seated on one of the sofas covered with crimson damask; her hand clasped in Frank's, his arm encircling her waist. They did not move when the mother entered.

"My children!" was her exclamation, as she came to them, and a burst of tears followed.

Oriel sprung up and clasped her mother in her arms. Frank brought a chair, beseeching her to sit down, and tenderly inquiring the cause of her distress.

"We have an enemy," she said, as soon as her emotion would allow her to speak;

"a powerful enemy, and I know not how to protect you."

"It is Mr. Clermont!" said the young girl. She had never called him father.

"He has come here determined to break off your engagement with Frank, and if possible to compel you to marry one of his own friends."

"As if he could!" exclaimed Oriel.

"Let him make the attempt!" said the young man.

"He is more powerful than you think. He has the law on his side; at least so he says; and he claims to be my daughter's guardian."

"Let us defy his authority!" cried Frank.

"He has never been a protector to her. Her affairs are in the hands of the executors. He can do nothing!"

"Oh, Frank, I never knew him threaten in vain; and he speaks with such determination. What shall be done?"

"There is but one thing to be done, dearest mother. Let Oriel become my wife at once."

The young girl colored deeply, and murmured a faint dissent. Her lover caught her hand, drawing her closer to him.

"Do you not say so?" he pleaded, earnestly, to her mother.

"The marriage must be hastened; I see no other way of escape," said Madeleine. "But it will require some days, and I tremble for her every moment! Stay—this can be done; she can leave London secretly."

Mrs. Byrne is at home; I will write to her this very night to receive her and keep her safe till you can join her, Frank, when every thing is ready. It will not do for her to stay here—and be subjected to Mr. Clermont's tyranny."

"Oh, mamma! let us both go! You and I—"

"I can not venture just yet; I must be here while he remains. But Frank can see you safe; can go with you, if necessary. It must all be done secretly; perhaps to-morrow evening. I will pack her things myself; I will write to Ada at once."

"And when shall I come for Oriel?" asked her lover.

"You must not come again. I would not have you meet him. Oh, you do not know him, either of you; but I do! I have had reason, these years—these years!"

She wrung her hands, as if excited by agonizing recollections.

"I will send you word, Frank," she resumed, "where you shall join her; you and she shall take the carriage to the station, while I keep the wolf at bay; the wolf that would devour my pet lamb!"

These words were uttered with streaming tears, while she pressed the girl to her throbbing heart.

After a few minutes' longer consultation, young Duclos took his leave, while the mother and daughter withdrew to make all necessary preparations for the meditated flight. They did not perceive the listener at the keyhole, who had heard all that passed.

The hasty letter to Mrs. Byrne was written, and given to the footman, with strict orders to post it immediately. What he did with it will presently be seen.

CHAPTER XX.

TWO VILLAINS IN COUNCIL.

In the rear of a stationer's shop, on a small square, was a little room shabby enough in its appointments, and much littered with papers, where sat Simon, the Jew, absorbed, apparently, in looking over accounts. He was stout and square built, with an ungainly gait, notwithstanding the promise of great strength in his muscular limbs. His face was in part concealed by a bushy beard, and by a black patch on his left cheek; a pair of green goggles, the expression of his countenance from the observer. What remained visible was a salow, muddy complexion, a coarse, brutish-looking mouth, and a low forehead, over which strayed a few locks of grizzled hair, leaving the top of the head entirely bald.

As the dim light was darkened by a shadow in the outer shop, he called out:

"Come in, come in, mein friend; you will find me at work in my den."

The tall form of Marlitt Clermont, stooping to pass under the low door, entered the interior room. He looked stern and pale, and made no gesture of salutation.

The Jew rose and offered him a seat. Then he carefully closed the door leading into the shop.

"I ask 'tousand pardons for giving mein honorable friend the trouble to come here; at the same time I am charmed to see him looking so well."

"I could not receive you—in that woman's house," returned the visitor, angrily.

"I thought you understood that. She must know nothing of my affairs."

"T'would be pardons! I thought de husband was de master in England."

"Don't talk in that way! To business! What did you want?"

"A trifle—a mere trifle. I have just forwarded for presentation de promissory note signed by you, for de amount of four thousand pounds."

"Why were you in such a dudge of a hurry?"

"Because, mein goot and very esteemed friend, you are too much at de gaming-table, and you do not see de difficulties dat are gathering round you. I discover dat your affairs are slightly embarrassed; and as I do business on account of oder persons, I must have de moneys before any oder creditor, you see."

Marlitt leaned over the table between them, and laid his hand confidentially on the Jew's arm. "My good Simon," he said, in a low tone, "I expect soon to have plenty of money. It is certain—in a few days. Grant me a little delay, and you shall be fully satisfied."

"Mein esteemed friend has found a rich husband for his daughter," said the Jew, with a glib chuckle. "Ah, I see; I have hit—as you say—de head on de nail. You don't seem quite comfortable, Misher Clermont. Are you not well? Pless my soul! you looks quite blue!"

"The villain!" muttered the gentleman, between his teeth. "How does he come to know every thing?"

"But this rich husband," continued Simon, eying his companion behind his clumsy spectacles, "is not the one the young lady has picked out for herself—eh? She sets down her pretty foot with what we men of business call a clencher. There is a hitch, mein friend."

"I do not understand you. Do you pretend to know any thing of my family affairs?"

"Just a vera keettle; what I hears out-

"What is that?"

"That you spend your moneys too fast; much too fast, and have to come on your wife for more from time to time. That she is very good woman, but does not like you, and pays her moneys to get rid of you; that she means to marry her daughter to Misher Frank Duclos in spite of you, and to give up all her moneys to the young people; that will cut you off from your extra supplies, mein vera good friend, and den you will be in von great big pickle."

"You rascal!" exclaimed Marlitt, starting to his feet; "what is the meaning of this?"

"Have you trace of the party?"

"Of course. But I shall give you no information."

"High, you have been doubly a villain!"

"You may spare your remarks, sir; I have been true to myself, and mean to be."

"High, you will sell me these papers?"

"I will thank you for them, sir; they are only copies; you have crushed them till they can hardly be made out."

He took the papers, smoothed them out, folded, and restored them to his pocket-book.

"You will sell them to me?"

"Not if I know it; just at present, sir."

"What are they worth to you?"

"Nothing, till I can make a bargain for them; and I have not made up my mind where to look for the best."

"High, I will pay higher than any one else."

"You are not exactly in condition, sir. Now, if you had the estate in hand—"

"That can be managed," whispered the other. "I have the promise, if I can make the girl marry Ormsley, of a transfer of the portion she would have, with an advance sufficient to cover my debts and set me aloft. I shall eschew gaming, and I can manage my way. High, I will make it your interest to cleave to my fortunes."

"If you can do that, master, I am yours entirely," said the ruffian, heartily. "And if your prospects are so good, I rather think I will cast in with you."

"You are safe in doing that. When will you let me have the papers?"

"No haste; I must work cautiously. I will not part with them under twenty thousand."

"Twenty thousand pounds?"

"Not a farthing less! But you could not raise the sum now. I know that very well. If you can get the transfer you spoke of, it might be managed."

"It shall be, and you must help me."

"Nobody can do it better."

The tinkling of the shop bell gave notice that the messenger had returned.

"Excuse me von moment," Hugh said, resuming his Jewish accent. He went into the shop, spoke to the boy, then went out for a few moments into the street.

When he returned, it was with a look of triumph on his repulsive visage. He passed into the back room, and resumed his seat.

"If you can manage," said Marritt, "to get the young man Duclos away from London for a few days, I can deal with the girl."

"Ah, my dear friend, without me she would be too much for you. She will leave London herself to-morrow."

"What do you mean?"

"Her mother intends sending her away—secretly—down the country—away to the Downs."

"For what purpose?"

"To keep her from you: that she may marry the young man—and that very soon, I can tell you."

"How do you know her plans?"

"Ah, sir, I have von littel bird, vot flies and tells me every ting."

"Do not dare to jest with me, fellow!"

"There, you are on your high horse again. Vell, den, I know the lady's mind from her letters—eh?"

He produced a neatly-folded letter, the seal of which had been broken, opened it, took out the inclosure, and presented it to his visitor.

Marritt recognized his wife's hand-writing at once. In extreme surprise he asked:

"How came this in your possession?"

"Ha, you are astonished, are you? Vell, one of your—I beg pardon—the lady's servants, when he was sent out to put it in the post, made some mistake, by having a crown put before his eyes, and take my pocket for de letter-box."

"You have a spy!" exclaimed the visitor, starting up, his face crimson with rage. "A spy in my house?"

"In the lady's house; you do not live there."

"What is that to you? It is my house as long as my wife lives in it! How dare you employ one of my servants as your spy, or tamper with his honesty, so as to intercept a letter?"

"Now, you are unreasonable, my dear! If I have not the letter, you would not know what it says. Your daughter would escape—would marry her lover; all your plans would be frustrated. You see it was necessary."

With an imperious gesture, enjoining silence, the unscrupulous gentleman read the letter.

It was the one addressed to Mrs. Byrne, making arrangements for Oriol's secret visit and speedy marriage.

The reader smiled grimly as he refolded the letter, which he placed in his vest pocket.

"To-morrow evening," he said, after a pause.

"Surely. Pless my soul, vot a fuss you made about nothing! You should save your rage till you have a little more time to spare."

"Never mind my rage; it is all very well this time. Now, tell me, what can be done to prevent the girl's flight?"

"We must catch her, and carry her off ourselves."

"At the station?"

"No—too many people; and young Duclos on the watch for her."

"She will not be alone?"

"If the lady or the maid goes with her, we can dispose of them—eh?"

"She is to leave the house at nine, and take the night train. Her mother is not to accompany her."

"But the young gentleman—"

"Duclos is to join her at the station. The carriage is to come direct from the house and pass by Waterloo Bridge. Why not get the young man out of the way, so that they do not meet?"

"It will go on, do; and the young lady might go on, hoping to meet him afterward."

"She would not go without him; she would return in the carriage, and would then be intercepted. As you plan it, the fellow would miss her directly, and there would be an alarm and a search."

"But I know, sir, of a secret passage from the street into the garden of a little hotel, where I know the folk well. There is a deep fountain in the center of the garden, and a drain opening to the river."

"Are you sure of the people?"

"As myself; if they are well paid."

"We must arrange about this to-morrow," said Marritt, rising. "It is of the last importance that this escape is prevented; yet I must not be known to move in it. If I can get her away safely, I can manage the rest."

Here the boy from the shop looked in, to

say that the hackman was waiting for Mr. Clermont's orders.

"I had forgot," he said; "I promised to dine with some friends. I will see you to-morrow, Hugh; but do not come to my hotel, nor to the house. I will call here at one o'clock. Have every thing ready; and don't forget to furnish masks."

"Masks! For what?"

"You do not suppose I shall risk being seen in this affair! You may do as you please; but have a mask for me."

"All very well. Goot-evening, my dear friend!"

The twilight had come on during the above colloquy, and the lamps were being lighted in the street. A hackney coach with two horses, in better condition than those belonging to ordinary public vehicles, was drawn up at the door.

"I did not order you to wait here," said Marritt, angrily, to the driver.

The man respectfully touched the hat slouched over his brows, and explained that he had seen him go into the Jew's shop, and as he remained so long, thought he would like to be taken up there, instead of at his hotel.

Marritt entered the carriage, and ordered the man to drive to Berkeley Square.

When he alighted, he bade him return for him at twelve, and handed him half a crown over his regular fare.

The driver took the money with the usual scrape of acknowledgment; but the moment the gentleman had turned his back to ascend the stone steps of the house, he dashed the silver on the ground with a muttered execration, and sprang to his seat, giving both the horses such a cut with the whip that they sprang away like lightning. He drove back to the front of Mr. Clermont's residence, where he halted at the usual stand for coaches, not returning to his stable. Any one who had observed him would have supposed he had been hired to watch the house.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 105.)

Almost a Sacrifice.

BY JENNIE D. BURTON.

BALLIER had just left the grand saloon and the billiard table, and stood balancing himself within the street entrance, humming a popular air as he wondered idly what he should do next.

He was one of those unfortunate mortals who had "done" the world so completely there seemed nothing fresh, new or attractive, remaining for him. This quandary that was puzzling him now, the mere necessity of killing time in a manner that should least bore him—every thing bored him—was no new one. He had known some enthusiasm, and made some energetic, though slightly disconnected, efforts once upon a time, but, left to himself, it is doubtful if he ever would have accomplished a work to immortalize him.

Twenty years ago he was an artist, with an independent income just sufficient to indulge his natural indolence while making a pretense of working his way through life. He had luxurious tastes, an appreciative eye, and a vein of romantic fancy very much tainted with selfishness. I'm afraid.

He had fallen in love, of course, and, even yet, sometimes had a fashion of referring to his destiny in a manner clearly indicating that he considered himself as having been a victim. Unfortunately, the pretty young girl who exchanged vows of affection and constancy with him was poorer by half a dozen degrees than the impecunious young artist himself; yet they might have afforded another illustration of love in a cottage had not good fortune come to the youth in the shape of a wealthy and eccentric patron.

Ballier, with one of his bursts of enthusiasm, availed himself of the opening offered, and, with protestations of unchangeable faith, sailed for the old world. Once in Rome, he painted a little, studied the same, and idled away a great deal of time in company with other young art-students of his own inclinations. His eccentric patron dying one day while yet enchanted with his newest plaything, left to Ballier the bulk of his fortune. Thus necessity for action, the single prop to his spasmodic endeavors, was knocked away, and his life since that had been a checkered one of idleness and dissipation.

The pretty young girl left behind him wasted, little time in regretting the tardy lover; she married and drifted into obscurity which he had never chosen to penetrate. Beyond a pang or two at first he suffered but little from heart regrets, though hugging to himself a sense of cherished grievance.

He was forty-two now, with little furrows in his forehead and some silver threads in his crisp, curling hair—not alone the insignia of passing years, perhaps.

A graceful figure in the moving throng caught his eye with a half-recognized familiarity as he still stood in the street entrance-way, and for the lack of any better employment he followed the direction it had taken. Scarcely impelled by an object, hardly feeling the lack of one, he followed on to find himself presently in one of the city parks and very near to the rustic bench on which was seated the graceful figure of the girl who had attracted him there.

He stood still, passing his fingers caressingly through the glossy waves of his hair, slowly drawing a recollection from the depths of the past as he scrutinized the fair, fresh face, which was the very counterpart of that other one, the girl he had loved and left—lost, he said—twenty years ago.

Some shadow of the old love must have been stirring then, for when a dashing young fellow was welcomed gladly to the vacant place by the girl's side, Ballier frowned and turned upon his heel with a vicious word.

He followed the slender thread that had its start that day. With no stronger interest to draw him away, he held to his clue persistently, and was gratified by the very result he had pictured.

Coral Lynne, wearing the perfect face which was not a new appeal to the artist's love of beauty, scarcely thought to violate the right of appropriation which he exercised. She knew him as an old friend of her mother, and the girl's heart went out to him gratefully as she saw the comfort his presence brought to the parent, whom she idolized.

To Ballier it seemed like a new phase of existence, when he entered the plain little rooms with the windows filled with growing plants and a mite of a singing bird in a gilded cage trilling out joyful notes. The shackles of this still cozy little home was no drawback to his enjoyment, for he saw in it the furtherance of his new-born desire.

The shackles of wedded life had not set easily on Mrs. Lynne. The pale, shadowy woman, with the wasted form and consumptive cough, could not be reconciled in his mind with that ideal of the past, of which the breathing representative was the girl Coral.

With his coming appeared, as well, many an unwonted delicacy in the poverty-stricken home, and poor, worn-out Mrs. Lynne was endless in her praises of the man who had been her lover.

"We are so wretchedly poor," she said to him one day. "It does not matter so much for me; I am over the worst—of life and its trials, I mean. The doctor has told me that I may not live a month. I am only troubled now for my little Coral."

"Does she know?" he asked, gently.

"Not yet. I am a pitiful coward in not finding courage to tell her."

"Let me do it, and don't worry over her future. Listen, Ally"—it was the old pet name by which he had known her. Coral shall not want; I am going to ask her to marry me."

The thin, worn face flushed, and the hollow eyes grew luminous, but a gloom shaded them almost immediately.

Alice Lynne's married life had been far from happy; it was present with her always, and had grown more vividly clear of late, how different that life might have been had the old compact been fulfilled. She felt now, for her daughter's sake, that Ballier's ordering of events might involve the same mistake which had embittered her own existence.

"If Coral loves you, nothing would give me greater content, but I would not cloud my child's life by leaving her an unloving wife."

"How can it be," he asked, smilingly, "when I love her so?"

And Mrs. Lynne, dazzled by the old infatuation, though surely that Ballier could not fail when he set himself to win a woman's heart, and vaguely pitied her own remnant of a wasted life.

He drew Coral away for a drive with him that afternoon. He chose a smooth, straight road lying beyond the city limits, and almost sympathized in the girl's delight over the stretches of landscape that unrolled, like a panorama, from every decided point of view. The cynical, *blasé* man had softened wonderfully in these last few weeks under the pure influence of the little home circle he had invaded. He dreaded now the effect of the communication he had to make, but would not lose the opportunity he had purposely sought.

He broke to Coral the fact of her mother's precarious state, and then urged his own cause through his knowledge of her devotion to her parent.

"I am sure she can be saved yet," he said, hopefully. "A winter in Italy, and a year of travel afterward, will bring renewed health. Will you marry me, Coral, *en route* for your mother's sake?"

I have said before that he was selfish. It must have been an intuitive fear of losing her that made him urge the plea which could most powerfully sway the girl's mind. A pallid shade settled over the exquisite face he loved to dwell upon, and the drooping eyes darkened with some intensity of emotion which locked her slender fingers in a tight clasp. Few women would have thought it a hard alternative presented to her, for Ballier was accepted as a star of enviable magnitude in the circles where he moved.

He waited for her answer, but waited in vain. Her face was turned away, but she was so rigidly still he thought she had not understood him after the shock his first announcement had brought.

"Coral, little darling, don't despair. There is hope, I know. Will it not be a blessed knowledge that you have saved your mother's life—let the thought make you brave to bear her present danger. But, Coral, you have not answered me."

Her hands closed convulsively one above the other.

"Give me a little time," she said, and her voice sounded strangely stifled.

"Time! At such a crisis, Coral? Have you no knowledge of your own heart?"

"Only a little time," she pleaded, humbly. "Only until morning."

"I shall expect your answer then," said Ballier, a little stiffly. His self-confidence was shaken by her hesitancy.

It was during such times when he reached his home again. Mrs. Lynne met them in the doorway, a little anxious, with a hectic flush upon her cheek which seemed like a brighter flicker of life to show how fragile was the vase. Coral lifted her face for her mother's kiss, rigid and cold as marble.

Ballier lingered, and the searching eyes of Coral's mother saw that all was not yet decided, but with a woman's tact she kept clear of the subject so vitally interesting to them all.

Coral came down with a waterproof wrapped about her, and passed quietly out into the street. Unobserved, for Ballier had been waiting for a word with her before he should go. He followed her; but so swiftly did the light form move through the swaying throng that, for a time, he only kept her in view without lessening the distance between them. During that time he had leisure to think, and continued to follow without attempting to accost her.

Straight on to the park where he had seen her first. A misgiving crept into his mind, and he watched her jealously. She turned into a side-path which lay in shadow and was wholly deserted now, pacing it back and forth with restless steps. Back and forth for a full hour, pausing now and then to listen, with palpitating heart and bated breath, as if for the approach of some one who came not.

The clock in a neighboring steeple rung out the hour, and drawing her cloak close about her, she turned to retrace her steps. Ballier came face to face with her as she passed out through the park gates; but his faint of an accidental meeting did not deceive her. He was startled at the wild gleam of her blanched face as he saw it for one instant by the light of a street lamp, when she turned the indignant blaze of her eyes upon him.

"I have not yet given you the right to dog my steps, Mr. Ballier. Could you not be generous enough to let me enjoy my last night of freedom?"

"I forgive your impatience of my anxiety for that much assurance, my Coral—mine through all the sweets and ills henceforth. I am not a demonstrative man, and I shall endeavor to make answer by my altered life of the sincerity of my love for you."

She shrunk away from him as he drew her hand within his arm, shivering. He half-paused, and glanced searching into

her excited, pallid face, as he quietly asked, "Have I mistaken, Coral? There must be no dallying; it is yes or no—life or death?"

"I promised you my answer to-morrow, Mr. Ballier, but the delay can profit me nothing now. You have not mistaken; I will marry you whenever you please."

"Thank you, Coral." He quietly pressed the unresponsive hand, and the distance to her home was traversed in silence.

"I will see your mother to-morrow," he said at parting. "I will come early for a half-hour with you first."

"Good-night," she answered, and passed in without the pretense of a lover's caress. There was a light in her mother's room, but Coral shut herself in her own apartment with a fierce determination that this night should witness the burial of the one dear hope which had glorified her otherwise monotonous life. The morning light, glimmering grayly through the casement, defined her figure drooping and dejected, her eyes heavy-lidded and dark, but with an enduring resolve fixed unwavering there.

She went down to the quiet, shabby rooms where, until now, she had known only happy hours, and waited wearily for Ballier's coming.

There came a quick, springy tread in the little passageway, and the door flew open under a more impatient hand than that of his fast-approaching suitor. A young man stood within the room, the same Ballier had seen with her that first day in the park.

"Coral, my own at last! Come to me, darling!"

She shrunk away with a terrified look.

"At last, Coral. You are not frightened now by this happy finish to all our troubles, pet? Dear trials, were they not, since we loved so truly through all? And now, dear one, nothing shall take me from you again."

She dropped upon a chair, and put out her hands with a deprecating motion when he would have come nearer.

"Too late!" she wailed. "Too late, forever!"

"What is it, Coral?" He stopped, the triumph and radiant expectation of his countenance changing to an expression of pained wonder.

"Why did you not come before?" she cried, moaningly. "I waited to the very last moment, and then how could I act differently? Despair me if you will, Graham; I have promised to marry another man—Ballier."

"Coral!" There was a world of reproach in his tone, and sorrow, but not anger.

"It is plainly my duty, Graham. Mother is dying here, and he may save her by the care his wealth will procure; for her sake I must abide by my promise. I waited to the very last, but you did not come."

"The man who estranged me from my father lay dying. He repented at the last, and confessed to the crime which he had saddled upon my shoulders; it was his wish to see us united again by the old bond of confidence and love. I waited with him until my father came; we are reconciled, and he is prepared to welcome you as a daughter to his home. Oh, Coral!"

"Not a word to influence me from my duty, Graham. Oh, love! it is hard, but we can only submit."

The two young, brave hearts were wrung to their cores. He would not utter the words which would make her task so much the harder; he knew she would not swerve from the straight line of duty she had marked.

"Farewell, Coral!" He gathered her trembling form into his arms, imprinting a kiss upon her forehead. "For the last time, pet!"

He turned, and Coral uttered a gasping cry, for in the doorway stood Ballier. He had heard and seen all, and a generous impulse—let us hope it may weigh against some of the crime which he had saddled upon my shoulders; it was his wish to see us united again by the old bond of confidence and love. I waited with him until my father came; we are reconciled, and he is prepared to welcome you as a daughter to his home. Oh, Coral!"

"Not a word to influence me from my duty, Graham. Oh, love! it is hard, but we can only submit."

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THE WITHERED LEAF.

BY LOUIS CARROLL FRENDEL.

Oh, darling, with what loving thought,
I gaze upon this fragrant leaf;
The tears rush to my eyes unsought,
My heart seems breaking sad with grief.

I look back now to when we stood,
That night together on the step;
Both hearts in sorrow's saddest mood,
Our eyes dimmed by sad tears wept.

Then as we spoke the last "good-by,"
You gave to me this little flower;
You kissed it first with tender sigh,
Thus freighting it with priceless dower.

Then speaking low in sad'ning tone,
You said, "When I am far from thee,
And you are left to mourn alone,
Then kiss this leaf and call it me."

'Tis withered now—its life has fled;
Yet treasured, dear, last gift from thee;
Till kiss might else, nought, instead,
You bring your sweet lips back to me!

Cecil's Deceit:

THE DIAMOND LEGACY.

BY MRS. JENNIE D. BURTON.
AUTHOR OF "ADRIA, THE ADOPTED," OR, THE MYSTERY OF ELLISFORD GRANGE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT WILL NOT A WOMAN IN LOVE DO.

The suppressed bustle of clearing the rooms of their withered decorations, the entire task of restoring order from the chaos which reigns after the withdrawal of a concourse of people, was carried on swiftly and silently as might be behind closed doors and intervening distances. Care was taken that no distressing sounds should reach the chamber where the master of Frampton Place lay so suddenly prostrated.

Doctor Strong had remained throughout the night. At daybreak he went away, leaving minute directions for the patient's treatment, and at noon called in on his return from other professional calls.

He spoke cheerfully of the case, but impressed the necessity of having his instructions implicitly followed.

Mr. Frampton's vigorous constitution will withstand a much harder siege than this promises to be," he said. "I do not apprehend a violent attack if it comes to the worst, and I think the prompt measures already taken have served to avert other than a light form of the disease. With ordinary care and watchfulness he will be up again within a week."

Cecil had thrown aside his rich garments, enveloping her form in a quilted negligee of dove-colored cashmere, and all the forenoon retained her place by her husband's side. Now she listened intently to the doctor's directions, and afterward with apparent reluctance relinquished her station to Olive, who affectionately insisted that she must take needed repose.

She had not been near Eve all the morning. Now she felt that it would only be additional suspense to longer defer the time which should assure her of the other's fate. She paused on the deserted landing to gain command over her panting breath, and fiercely-beating heart. She had not once wished actual harm to befall Eve, and she shrank even now from the possibility of finding her beyond the power of asserting her claim again to her own (Cecil's) discomfiture. Her hand shook as she fitted the key into the lock, but her nerves were under complete subservience when she went in at last.

She crossed the floor and knelt by the side of the couch. A glance dispelled the horror which the utter stillness of the room had called up. The crisis had passed, leaving Eve weak and helpless as a little child, but with a new lease upon the life which had been so nearly wrested from her.

She opened her eyes wonderingly as Cecil stooped over her, and murmured her name faintly.

"Cecil!"

"Be very quiet," Cecil said, knowing intuitively that the time recently passed was as a blank or an obscure vision to the other. "You have been ill and are still very weak."

"I have been dreaming, I think, horrible things! Where is papa?"

For the time all remembrance of her past sufferings was blotted out, and Cecil would not recall those grievous reminiscences.

"You must see no one until you have gained strength," she answered, evasively.

"Sleep if you can; it will do you more good than any medicine, now."

Eve smiled silently. She was too confused yet to note her strange surroundings and wonder at them. She closed her eyes, and soon slept softly as the infant which has known no care in life.

"I must not let her suspicions be aroused," reflected Cecil, as she gazed on the thin face where just the faintest tinge of warmth broke the transparent whiteness of the skin.

"It is time now for the potion to do its work."

So, when she came again, bringing broth that had been ostensibly prepared for the other invalid, she had the vial of colorless liquid with her. Just a drop in the drink she held to Eve's lips, but she knew it was all her purpose required.

She sought her chamber afterward, and tried to gain a few moments' repose. But the vial containing the potion which she had concealed in her bosom, seemed like a thorn planted there, painfully rankling.

She took it out and held it up to the light. The clear compound, so seemingly innocent, had a fascination for her which she could not resist. Over and over again she conned the substance of the words the old Jew had spoken.

"A single drop once a day will keep the patient in a quiescent, tractable state; double that quantity will produce stupor and confusion of the mental faculties. An overdose produces coma, which ends in death without leaving any apparent trace."

Then words which Victor had spoken to her once since their evil compact had been made, rose up and ranged themselves along with these.

"Were it not for your husband it might be different. Were you free now I might renounce every other consideration for you alone."

It seemed so easy to free herself from the whole complicated toil by a single bold stroke. With the fear of Hugh Frampton's vengeance forever removed, his wealth in her hands, she need fear no rival, and the considerations which swayed Victor now would be easily swept away.

It was useless to woo sleep with such thoughts in her mind. She arose and confronted her image in the mirror above the dressing-table. Her face was aglow with bright color, her eyes sparkling, her lips scarlet with excitement. No one could

have deemed that murderous thoughts were astir beneath that beautiful mask. She scarcely realized it herself. She was dwelling on the future which lay beyond, the space between to be bridged by the commission of that dark crime.

She went back to her husband's side with the vial still concealed in her bosom.

Doctor Strong called again during the evening. He expressed himself well satisfied with the condition of his patient, and ordered some slight changes in his treatment.

"I will drop in some time to-morrow," he said, as he departed; "perhaps not until late in the day. If any decided change takes place except for the better, let me know at once."

No serious consequences were apprehended by the household. All had perfect faith in the skill of Doctor Strong and in the truth of his assurance.

Cecil pleaded to keep the night vigil alone, but when overruled in that, agreed to give up the watch during the later hours to Dick Holstead. Olive, who had been in constant attendance during the day, retired early to her chamber.

The hours passed, and at midnight Richard took up his position at the bedside. Mr. Frampton slept heavily until day, and then only stirred uneasily without awaking. Cecil was with him again from the dawn.

Her devotion was touching, the servants declared, in their own manner of expression, and others thought the same. Olive's heart warmed toward her as it had never done before.

It was growing dusk when the doctor came again. His assured manner as he entered the sick-room changed as he bent over the patient in the semi-gloom.

He called for a light and contemplated him in grave silence.

"There has been a change, and not for the better," he said. "I should have been called before this."

"He has slept almost constantly," Cecil hastened to say. "We thought he was doing well."

"This is no natural sleep. It is a stupor more pernicious in its effects than even delirium would be. I am free to confess it is a symptom I can not reconcile with his former condition."

Then, as if fearing he had said too much, he added:

"Mind, I don't apprehend any danger. It is simply unfortunate, and threatens to retard the speedy recovery which I predicted."

Cecil followed him into the hall as he was going away.

"Don't deceive me, doctor," she begged, clasping her white hands and lifting her fair face full of anxious pleading. "It is mistaken kindness to attempt to blind me! Will he live?"

"Eve," he ejaculated, the doctor, in the abrupt manner peculiar to himself. "Did I not tell you he's in no absolute danger? Only see that my directions are strictly followed, and I pledge myself to bring him up sound as new."

"But, doctor—pardon the doubt—I thought you did not exactly understand his case."

"Well, you are partly right," he answered, bluntly. "I have never had a parallel case, but I don't despair, for all that. I don't mind telling you plainly, madam, that every thing depends upon his rousing from this uncomfortable stupor; yet I don't think it advisable to employ severe agencies. The fever is checked in the start; consequently there's no fictitious strength to combat it; but a man of Mr. Frampton's tenacity should be able to throw off such torpor. That's a plain statement of the case, and nothing very alarming in it, I assure you."

Cecil stood looking after him as he strode out. An inscrutable smile crept across her face as her fingers clutched the concealed vial.

Victor D'Arno, himself unseen, had witnessed this interview from behind the sweeping curtains of an oriel window near by. He followed Cecil's retreating figure, muttering:

"She loved me, but in her anger once she would have struck me a murderous blow. He is an obstacle in her way now; will she be more lenient with him? I must watch, and perhaps turn the circumstance in my favor."

That evening, as before, Cecil retained her place in the sick-room. The others came and went silently, sharing her vigil. When she was alone for a moment, she drew out the hidden vial, dropping from its contents into a goblet upon the table where the medicines were ranged.

Victor, entering at the moment, noticed the quiet action of her hand dropping to her side.

"You must not fatigue yourself, Cecil," said he, in the tender, commanding tone which he knew she would not resist. "Go now, and get what rest you can. I am to watch through the night, and will call you if there is any change. What if this should result in perfect freedom to you, my own?"

Her quick glance flashing up to him was sufficient answer.

She was really very weary.

"I think I can sleep now. It is time to give the medicine; afterward I will follow your advice."

She turned toward the range of vials, but his quick motion anticipated her.

"This yellow liquid?" he asked, interposing the form between her and the little table. "Five drops, I think, was the order, and the powder in an hour."

In the brief moment he diverted her attention, he had managed to deftly rinse the goblet, emptying its contents into his handkerchief. Now he dropped the liquid into it and placed it to the lips of the invalid. Cecil watched the unconscious man swallow every drop, and went away satisfied.

Quiet fell upon the household. A tiny bronze clock upon the wall pointed its silent fingers to the midnight hour. The night-lamp diffused a softened light through the room.

Victor drew close to the bedside, fixing his eyes intently upon the sick man's face.

Moments flew by. Victor's face grew rigid and white as the one pressed against the pillows, and great, cold drops started out upon his brow, but his fixed gaze never wavered.

Mr. Frampton moved his head slightly and sighed. Victor drew a deep inspiration as of relief, and a moment after the other's eyes opened.

Victor's lips moved, but he essayed twice before any sound escaped them.

"Follow my commands," he said, slowly and clearly. "Lift your hand."

The hand which had lain powerless upon the counterpane was immediately raised.

"That will do. Repeat after me: 'I have no power to resist your will.'"

Clearly and distinctly fell the repetition:

"I have no power to resist your will!"

"It is my will that you, Victor D'Arno, wed with my niece, Olive Tremaine!"

Mechanically the words passed Mr. Frampton's lips.

Victor clasped his hands over his eyes, and then passed them over Mr. Frampton's brow. The latter relapsed almost immediately into his former unconscious state.

D'Arno wiped his damp brow, and, pouring wine from a flagon at hand, took a deep draught.

"It was a terrible strain," he muttered to himself, "but I have him now pliant to my will as wax in the molder's hands."

"If it is as I suspect, that she is drugging him, all the better; but he must not have an overdose until I have accomplished my end."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DOCTOR ON A TRAIL.

THREE days passed. Mr. Frampton rallied slightly, but for the most part was unconscious of all that took place about him.

Doctor Strong came and went with calm, impassive features, that told no tale to anxious observers.

The fourth morning a drizzling rain set in, rendering the atmosphere chilly and uncomfortable for the season, throwing an additional gloom over the inmates of Frampton House.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders dismally as he paused in the doorway to button the collar of his waterproof coat close about his throat. His calling left him no choice between blue sky and leaden, down-pouring clouds, so he plunged unhesitatingly into the uninviting out-door space.

His horse, shaggy of coat, uncouth but strong of limb, and like his master inured to all phases of weather, jogged unconcernedly over the road toward the village. Midway he drew rein as Mr. Darnley approached from the opposite direction.

"Just from Frampton Place," he replied to the latter's inquiry. "Are you going there? If so, you may as well turn back again; I've left standing orders that none but the family be admitted to him."

"How is he?" Mr. Darnley asked, turning his horse's head round about.

"So-so," returned the doctor, after the non-committal manner of his class. "Little change—fluctuating—nothing decisive."

"He has the fever, I've been told," continued the other, "the same which has created such a panic nearer the city. Is it likely to set hard upon him?"

Mr. Darnley was a well-known friend of Hugh Frampton's, and the doctor answered him more unreservedly than he would have done most inquirers.

"Three days ago, if you had asked me that, I would have told you not, decidedly. I don't know what to make of his case. If it wasn't so improbable, I should think some one was tampering with his condition; anyway, the medicines are not producing the results they should."

Mr. Darnley's face caught an anxious shade.

"Who would do it?" he asked.

"No one, of course. I should not have mentioned it even as a supposition. It would be hard for any person to work him such ill, even if an object was to be gained by it, his wife is so devoted to him. She scarcely leaves his side, and herself sees that my instructions are carried out."

"His wife?" repeated Mr. Darnley, slowly. "Young wives sometimes have an interest in ridding themselves of elderly husbands."

The same thought had occurred to Doctor Strong, and while the doubt had been too shadowy to act upon, his allusion to Mrs. Frampton had been made less in good faith than as a bait to draw out the other's opinion.

He kept his eyes averted, lest his intention should betray itself, and waited.

"Frampton's wife seems to have taken the whole neighborhood by storm," continued Mr. Darnley, "but, for all that, I haven't fancied her. It may be all prejudice on my part, for I've nothing to base it on unless—"

He stopped short as some dim idea broke upon him. The doctor eyed him now, impatiently.

"Well?"

"A couple of weeks, or more ago, the last time I was in New York, I stumbled across her in an out-of-the-way part of the city, not a very reputable section. I did not recognize her at the time, but I'd willingly take oath to it now that I saw her go into a drug store on — street. I remember noticing the name above the door; it was M. Isaac!"

"M. Isaac! No. 337?" queried the doctor.

"I can't say for that, but it may have been."

"I know the man; have had dealings with him, in fact. I think you have given me a serviceable idea, Mr. Darnley. That Jew has more than ordinary skill in his craft and may furnish me with a hint or two where I've found my own knowledge lacking. I turn off here; good-morning to you!"

Doctor Strong did not intend that the other should fathom his suspicions, and assured that he had gained all information bearing upon the point at stake, thus abruptly left him.

CHAPTER XX.

A DEATH-CHAMBER PROMISE.

AT Frampton House every minor interest was apparently absorbed by the issue at stake in the sick-room. It was known now that the master's condition was at least precarious. Olive's grief, though silent, was deep and heartfelt.

Cecil had grown nervous, and incessant watching was leaving her wan, but no less resolute in attendance.

Her husband's state was a puzzle to her, as it had been to the physician. Every day she had dropped the potion into the draught prepared for him, gradually increasing the quantity used; but the effect was not as decided as she could wish.

She was giving it to Eve in minute portions at the same time with satisfactory result. The latter was rapidly gaining strength, but her mind had not cleared, and she remained quite content and unsuspicious in her prison chamber.

Cecil could not account for the slow action of the mixture upon her husband. The truth was that Victor had exercised an espionage over her, and through his watchfulness but little of the drug had been actually administered. For his own reasons he left

her in ignorance of the action he was taking.

The afternoon was wearing away, when Victor, who was left for a brief space above with the invalid, hastily summoned the others.

"There has been a change," he said. "Whether for better or worse I can not tell."

They hastened silently into the room, Cecil, Olive and Richard. The servants gathered in the corridor, an awe-stricken group, whispering to each other that the end was near.

Mr. Frampton was bolstered in a half-sitting posture. His eyes, wide open, seemed fixed and vacant, yet he apparently recognized those about him, and addressed them coherently for the first time in days.

"Cecil, Olive, are you both there?" he asked, feebly.

They pressed close to the bedside.

"My dearest ones! It is hard to know that I must leave you."

Cecil was white and speechless. Olive, affected beyond control, knelt by him, clasping his hand, which she shuddered to find clammy and cold.

"Uncle! dear uncle!" she cried, striving in vain to repress her tears. "Oh, it can not be so! You will not be taken from us for many years."

"Don't cry, pet! I feel the truth of what I say. My life is almost drifted out, and it is better so than that I should live and suffer."

He paused, breathing heavily. His utterance was slow, yet distinct, but no shade of expression moved his features. He was pallid as death, and his set gaze on the vacancy before him never wavered.

"Olive!"

"What is it, dear uncle?"

"You have been a good, obedient child. You will not refuse me my dying wish?"

She sobbed aloud, but struggling with her grief, answered him:

"Ask me any thing you will! Let me prove that I am not ungrateful for your long kindness to me."

"I should like to see you happy and beyond fear of trouble coming to you. There is another who loves you, scarcely better, but with a different love from that which I have borne you. Victor will protect you when I am gone, and it will be a comfort to me to see you his wife. Send for a minister that he may unite you here where I can bestow my dying blessing."

Victor, shrouded by the curtains at the bed's foot, came forward now to her side.

"You will not deny him his request, Olive? I will never let you repent the act."

Richard started forward as Victor's arm fell caressingly upon her shoulder. Knowing the baseness of the man's heart, he would as soon have seen her wreathed about by a serpent's coils.

Remembering the place, and the danger of excitement to Mr. Frampton, he restrained the indignant protest upon his lips.

Olive shuddered.

"It seems so terrible to thus unite what should be my greatest joy with my greatest grief."

Dick, hearing her words, thought with an indefinable thrill:

"She has not perfect faith in him, or she would entertain no doubt that life with him should be her greatest joy."

Cecil seemed robbed of power or desire to act. Her fingers were interlaced in a tight clasp across her bosom, her face rigid and anguished. She saw the result she was periling her soul to avert being brought to pass through her own unmeaning agency.

"You will consent, to please me, Olive?" Mr. Frampton said, his voice dying to a whisper. "I am growing very weary, but I want your assurance before I can rest."

"It shall be as you wish," Olive replied. "I could not deny you any thing now, uncle Hugh."

"Then send—send at once—for the minister. He spoke with painful effort. 'Don't delay, or it will be too late.'"

Victor stepped to the door and beckoned Giles, who formed one of the waiting group in the corridor, to approach.

"Go for Mr. Deane with all haste, and bring him back with you. Tell him your master is very low, and his services are immediately required. Send those women below where their noise will not disturb him."

The last order was called forth by a burst of sobs from Euny Brown, who was near enough to overhear his words.

"He is dying! Our good, kind master is dying!" she sobbed; and the lamentations of the group as they crept away, were borne into the sick-room, but Mr. Frampton had sunk into his former apathetic state, and did not heed them.

"Stay a moment," Richard Holstead commanded Giles. "On your way call for Doctor Strong, and send him at once. Make all possible speed as you value your master's chance of safety."

The injunction was scarcely needed. Giles went upon his mission with a celerity which promised its speedy fulfillment.

Richard returned to the darkened chamber, and finding Mr. Frampton apparently in a quiet slumber, after some ineffectual efforts, succeeded in drawing Olive away.

"Let me speak with you if only for a moment," he whispered.

She followed him into an adjoining apartment, weeping yet, but more silently.

"It may seem harsh to speak to you as I am about to do," he began. "Let me beg of you not to fulfill the promise you have just given. Do not consent to this marriage. I am counseling you for the happiness of all your future life, and even the weight of a dying man's request should not balance against that. I know Victor D'Arno is unworthy of you, Olive; I know that he does not love you as you should be loved; I believe that he has wooed you only to consummate some selfish and villainous end. I don't ask you to believe all this at once; only defer the marriage which will otherwise place your safety in his power."

"I can not disappoint my uncle," she replied, tearfully. "I could never forgive myself if he died sorrowing over any act of mine."

"You would sacrifice your whole life to afford him a few moments' satisfaction over the gratification of a whim which may be the result of weakness or wandering fancy, and which he may recover yet to repent unavailingly."

"It is useless to say more," Olive interrupted him, firmly. "You know it is only precipitating my marriage, and in the end what can the little time matter? You should not speak to me as you have done of Victor, who will soon be my husband."

"If I believed him worthy of you, or knowing him unworthy, yet believed in his

love for you, I would not interfere. You shall judge of my reason for thinking otherwise."

He repeated to her the declaration he had overheard Victor utter in the grounds.

"You must have been mistaken," Olive said. "Even if it were all as you say, I would still risk the chances of his deceit rather than have uncle Hugh suffer upon his death-bed through my refusal to comply with his wishes."

With that she left him, returning to her position by Mr. Frampton's side.

Within an hour Giles returned, bringing the clergyman with him. Doctor Strong was not at his own house, and he (Giles) had left a message with the doctor's housekeeper, which would be delivered immediately on the doctor's return.

Victor explained to the minister the nature of the office required of him, and led him directly to the sick man's presence.

Mr. Frampton roused himself at their approach, and feebly checked the clergyman when he would have uttered some words of pious exhortation.

"The marriage first," he said. "If there is time you can pray with me afterward."

Victor, approaching Olive, took her unresisting hand in his, and led her before the holy man.

Reverend Mr. Deane, a meek, studious man, cast an undecided glance about him, and began the ceremony which should link them man and wife.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEED IS DONE!

DICK HOLSTEAD stood by in gloomy silence. He had done what he could, and was powerless to save the girl he loved from what he felt assured must prove future misery to her, since she would take no step to save herself.

If he had possessed proofs of D'Arno's contemplated villainy it might have been otherwise; but, at most, his was only a suspicion founded upon words which the other might construe into apparently harmless meaning, and in which light Olive was determined to regard them. She was resolved, despite all, to give herself unhesitatingly into his power.

The hopes which he had permitted to spring up almost unconsciously during the few days past were turned now to a gall of bitterness, all the more irksome to his spirit that he felt the uselessness of striving against it.

Much as he suffered, Cecil's concealed passions were yet more intense. Every sense was strained to the utmost, but she was outwardly composed as the minister's monotonous voice broke the silence which had fallen.

In a short exhortation he impressed the solemnity of the rite he was about to celebrate, and the faithful performance of the duties it involved.

Then he began, in an impressive manner, the usual marriage formula.

Victor's response was given, clear-toned and steady. Then the minister addressed Olive.

"Do you accept this man as your lawful husband? Will you cling to him through life; through evil report and good report; through sickness and health; riches and poverty—till death do you part?"

Instead of a reply there came a low, terrified shriek from Olive. She was gazing straight before her, her face blanched, her limbs trembling beneath her weight. The ordeal of the afternoon had shaken her more than any one imagined, and now she sunk fainting to the floor.

Unperceived by the rest, the door had swung, noiselessly, open, and a shadowy, white-robed figure was outlined upon the threshold. To Olive, wrought upon by strong mental emotion, it appeared like a warning from the spirit world.

Even Cecil was startled for a moment by the unexpected apparition. There was something strange in the air of the appearance—a vague yet gentle expression in the pure face, surrounded by a floating mist of soft, bright hair, that struck a feeling of awe through every one there.

For an instant breathless silence reigned in the room. Then the door, impelled by some passing draught, swung shut again.

Richard, closely followed by the clergyman, sprung forward and tore it open.

The corridor without was vacant; no sight or sound to indicate that human presence had been there.

Hesitating momentarily, the two proceeded to search the passageways and apartments near at hand, but without result. Then Richard went below to question the servants, but no one could account for the strange appearance.

The interruption broke the inaction which Cecil had imposed upon herself. As Richard and Mr. Deane rushed from the apartment, Victor stooped to raise Olive's prostrate form.

Mr. Frampton lay motionless upon the pillows, only his open, staring eyes indicating that he saw or heard aught that passed around him. Cecil glided to his side, all of the demoniacal hate which had gathered in her heart distorting her features.

the motionless form. He laid his hand upon the cold forehead, and then, turning down the covering, upon the heart which no longer beat.

Tears, of which he was not ashamed, stood in his eyes, and his voice was broken as he said:

"All is over; he is dead!"

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 107.)

Tracked to Death: OR, THE LAST SHOT.

BY CAPT. MAYNE REID.
AUTHOR OF "HELPLESS HAYO," "LOVE RANCHER,"
"SCALP HUNTERS," "WHITE CHIEF," ETC.

CHAPTER LVIII.

LOOKED UP.

ALMOST at the very instant when the negro had brought in the report that Fernand could not be found, the half-blood was conducting the savages through the gap in the garden wall.

And soon afterward, when the girls had been kidnapped and carried off, he was still nearer to the dining room. He was advancing toward it stealthily; not as an obsequious servant, but the guide of a band of housebreakers, prepared for murder as for plunder.

Had those lately inquiring for him but known of the guise in which he was making approach, they would have rushed forth to meet him—perhaps at the same time to meet their own doom.

Fortunately for them they did not know it, and remained inside the room. They only stayed to question the negro, intending afterward to take action outside.

"What do you mean, boy?" thundered Dupre, in a voice that well might frighten the darkey out of his wits. "Is Fernand not within the house?"

"Dat's jess what he a'n't, Mass' Looney. De Panish Indyan a'n't no wha' inside de buildin'. We hab s'arch all oba de place. De people call out his name, Fernan', in de store-rooms, an' in de coatyard, an' in de cattle enclosure—ebbery wha' dey c'd tink of. Dey shout loud 'nuf for him to hyer of he war anywha' 'bout. He giv no answer. Sartin shoo he no inside dis' tablishment."

The young Creole appeared dismayed. So also the others, in greater or less degree, according to the light in which each viewed the matter.

While perplexed by their mystery, on the minds of all was an impression that there was danger at the bottom of Fernand's doings—serious danger not only to themselves, but to the whole settlement.

How near it was they knew not, though it was at that moment nearer than any of them dreamt.

At any other time the absence of Fernand from the house would have been a circumstance not worth noting. It might have been supposed that he was abroad visiting in some of the huts appropriated to the humbler families of the colonist fraternity.

Or the attraction might be a mulatto "wench," of whom there were several, belonging to Dupre's extensive slave-gang, some of them far from ill-favored.

The half-blood himself was rather a handsome fellow, as also given to gaiety. This would have accounted for his temporary absence from the house and his duties as its head servant. Now, it not unnaturally caused alarm, connecting it with the suspicious already entertained about him.

What the young surgeon had seen, and, above all, the report just brought in by the hunter Hawkins, impressed every one within the room, forcing them to the conclusion that Fernand was a traitor.

The question was asked: how, coming direct from the States, he could have an understanding with the savages of Western Texas?

In answer to this question Colonel Armstrong and Dupre now recalled to memory what had been made known to them by the man himself—that he had visited Texas before, and had been all over it. While seeking an engagement he had professed this much of Texan travel, with a view of supporting his claim to capacity for service. Therefore, his being in correspondence with Comanches, or any other Texan Indians, need be no mystery, should it turn out that he was so. It might be the renewal of a former acquaintance. Though in blood he was half-Indian, in physical appearance and other characteristics he was near or three-quarters aboriginal. Stripped of civilized garb, and clad in the true red-skin costume, he would have looked the savage to perfection; as much so as any one of the painted cohort he was at that moment guiding through the Mission garden, to bring ruin, it might be death, to the men making free with his name.

Unconscious of the proximity of their danger, they remained discoursing of him and it. His unaccountable absence from the premises had roused them to a pitch of excitement that called for immediate action.

Still had they enough coolness left to perceive the necessity of deliberation before taking any steps. They saw the mistake they had committed, in relaxing their watchfulness. Their reliance upon the Texan treaty—with the fact of no Indians having been seen or heard of on the way—had lulled them into a security which, if false, might cost them their lives.

All within the room remembered that at that hour no sentinels were set, not even the ordinary horse-guard. If the Indians intended attack, it might be made at any moment.

Still, it was not likely that the small band seen by Hawkins and Tucker would be bold enough to make an assault on the settlement.

The hunters had counted in all twenty-one men. There were nearly three times this number of the colonists capable of bearing arms. Even the boys, like all backwoods youth, could use the rifle—or knife, if it came to close quarters. After all, there need be no uneasiness; they could not have much to fear.

Reflecting in this fashion contributed to allay their apprehensions, though it did not altogether remove them. Enough remained to prevent them from resuming their seats around the dinner-table. They did not think of such a thing. On the contrary, they resolved on at once taking precautionary measures. They would collect a patrol, and throw out sentries around both the Mission building and the outlying collection of humbler dwellings, in which most of the colonists were lodged.

They only returned to the table to take another drink, and then "To arms!"

They had faced toward it—some to quaff off their already half-emptied glasses, others to refill them—when the door of the dining-room was again thrown open; this time with a hurried violence that caused all of them to start as if a bombshell had rolled into the room. On facing round, they saw the negro boy again entering, the same who had reported the absence of Fernand. Fear was depicted in his face, and wild terror gleamed from his eyes; the latter so awry in their sockets that little else than their whites could be seen.

Their own alarm was not much less than his on hearing what he had to say. His words were:

"Oh, Mass' Armstrong! Oh, Mass' Looney! De place am full ob Indyan sababages! Dey've come up de garden, troo back passage. Dar outside, in de coatyard, more 'n a thousan' ob 'em!"

At the dread tidings glasses dropped from the hands that held them; most of them flung down in fury. As one man, all rushed toward the door.

It was standing ajar, as the darkey in his scare had left it. It was not their intention to shut it, but to rush outside for the protection of those dear to them.

Before they could reach the door they had confirmation of the negro's words—too full. They saw faces hideous with a besmearing of red paint, heads horrid with coal-black shaggy hair, and plumes bristling above them.

But a glimpse had they of these, dimly visible in the obscurity outside. Though short it was terrible; like a transitory tableau in some fearful drama, or a glance into hell itself.

The sight brought them to a stand; though only for an instant. Then they dashed on toward the doorway, regardless of what awaited them beyond.

Before they had reached it the door was swung to, striking the lintels with a loud clash.

This sound was quickly followed by another, that of a key turning in its lock and shooting a heavy bolt into its keeper.

They were shut in!

CHAPTER LXI.

INSIDE.

No pen could depict what took place in the refectory of the ancient Mission when its door was locked on Colonel Armstrong and his guests, and they saw themselves shut in. Not only shut in, but helplessly, hopelessly imprisoned.

A glance around the room convinced them of this. There was but one way of egress—the doorway leading into the corridor that skirted the *patio*, or central court of the quadrangle. This door resembled that of a jail, massive, made of thick oaken planks, further strengthened by transverse cleets and clasps of iron. An enormous old-fashioned lock, with a strong bolt, gave it security when shut—as it now was. Of windows there were two, facing toward the outside of the building; but both small, as if only intended to give light to a cloister. They were far above the level of the floor; and further protected, against either egress or ingress, by vertical iron bars, so thick as to defy the file of either jail-breaker or burglar. The panes, while dining, did not much affect the light of the sun. More pleasing to them to see their refectory table garnished with grand wax candles, abstracted from the ceremonies of the church; more agreeable to think that, while quaffing and laughing, no eye of novice could see, nor ear hear them.

On the door being closed, Colonel Armstrong and his fellow-colonists did not at first fully realize the desperateness of their situation. It was only after scanning the room around, and perceiving the impossibility of getting out, that this became clear. Then the scene of confusion, already wild, was followed by a pause, in which intense emotions and heartfelt passions had fullest play. As if from one throat pealed a simultaneous shout. It was a cry of rage, intoned with an accent of distress, as they thought of the dear ones outside; there at no great distance, but separated from them, and as truly beyond reach of their protection as if twenty miles lay between!

Colonel Armstrong thought of his daughters, Dupre of his fiancée, the young surgeon of his sister, the others of wives and children. All more or less had their share in the anguish of the hour.

For some moments they stood as if paralyzed, gazing in one another's faces in dumb despair. Then anger again roused them to energy, though they knew not how to direct it.

The hunter Hawkins, a man of Herculean strength, flung himself against the door and butted it with his shoulder-blades, in hope of heaving it from its hinges. Vain hope! It resisted all his efforts, several times repeated.

Others joined with him; and several, uniting their strength, attempted to burst the door open.

Their efforts were idle. It hinged to the inner side, and could not be forced—unless along with its posts and lintels. These were as firm as the stone wall in which they were set, and defied all efforts to dislodge them. The massive wood-work, strengthened with iron cleets, would have stood firm against the shock of a battering-ram. Easier for them to have crevassed the wall, and through it obtained egress.

Finding the door could not be forced, they gave it up in despair.

The windows were next attempted; both simultaneously, but with like result. In planning their Mission building the monks had taken care that it should be made safe against assault from the outside. The window bars were as thick as a jail grating; and, though time and rust had somewhat weakened them, they were yet strong enough to sustain the shock of a man's shoulder, or any pull from the stoutest pair of arms.

For some minutes the imprisoned men kept shaking and tugging at them; some irresolutely rushing across the room from door to windows, and back again; others confusedly groping around the walls in search of any implement that might help in gaining them an exit. None such could be found. There was nothing in the refectory except a large dining-table and a set of light cane chairs, all useless for the purpose required.

They searched, groping in darkness. For, on finding themselves shut in, they had blown out the candles. They had done it as a precautionary measure; expecting every moment to be shot at from the outside.

They had no firearms themselves; neither guns, pistols, nor arms of any kind. Even

the dinner knives had been removed, along with the table-cloth; and the only weapons they might make available were bottles and decanters!

More than all did they regret being without guns or pistols. Not that with either they could have done ought to injure the enemy that had so cunningly placed them *hors de combat*. But shots fired—even a single one—might have been heard at the ranch, given warning of the attack, and brought their fellow-colonists to the rescue.

After failing in their attempts to force a way out, they remained for a time silent, listening acutely. No report of guns, or other firearms, reached them. Instead they heard shouts, which they could distinguish as the cries of the household servants—all negroes, mulattoes, or quadroons. No voice of white man could be recognized mingling in the melee.

And there was no savage yell; such as is usually raised by Indians, and kept up by them, while engaged in action either warlike or predatory. Alone could be heard the voices of the domestics; these in a confused *fracas* that spoke of fear. At intervals came a cry that had the accent of agony. Then groaning and moaning, heard only for a short while, and as if suddenly and forcibly silenced. After that all sounds ceased; and outside was silence, too like that of death!

CHAPTER LX.

OUTSIDE.

WHILE the men shut up in the Mission dining-room were madly struggling to get out of it, other men were enacting a tragedy in its courtyard, terrible as any ever represented on the stage of a theater.

They were the Indians, whom Dupre's traitorous servant had guided upon the place.

After entering the garden and making seizure of the two girls, they had continued on for the house—the half-blood still at their head.

Thus conducted, by one who well knew the way, they were enabled to pass through the inclosure at the back, and reach the *patio* without being observed. They had entered the inner court before any of the servants saw them. When seen, the alarm was instantly raised, but too late. The negro lad, still searching for Fernand, was the first to perceive their approach. With a cry of terror he had rushed back to the room, the savages close following at his heels. It was then they appeared outside the door, soon after shut by themselves.

That their design was at first only robbery, and not red murder, might appear from their way of setting about their work. Inspired by hatred to the pale-faces—or any purpose of retaliatory vengeance—their behavior would have been different. Instead of locking the door, and leaving Colonel Armstrong and his friends unmolested, they would have shot down, tomahawked, and scalped every one of them. For they could easily have done this, on the spot, and at the instant. Even after closing the door they could have done it. They carried arms of almost every kind used for offense—guns, pistols, spears, tomahawks, and knives. By firing through the windows, they would have had no difficulty in killing every man inside the room, some within reach of spear-thrust.

That they refrained from taking this advantage may appear strange; as it did to the men who might have been made victims then, every one of them expecting it. For thus abstaining from slaughter they had a motive. It had nothing to do with humanity. They did not shoot down the white men, simply because the shots would make too much noise. The reports of their guns might be heard by other white men, who would soon be upon them—soon enough to frustrate their design.

Clearly from the way they were acting their aim was plunder, not murder; and they did not particularly wish to kill the white men, if it could be conveniently avoided.

They were no common burglars, however. Their appearance showed them prepared for any thing; and their deeds soon proved it. Almost on the instant of entering the courtyard, they had commenced shedding blood. It was the blood of the poor slaves, who, at first sight of the savages, rushed distractedly around, giving utterance to the wildest shrieks. It was necessary they should be silenced. In an instant, and almost simultaneously, their cries were stifled by the stroke of a tomahawk, the thrust of a spear, or the stab of a knife.

The scene resembled a saturnalia of demons—demons doing murder!

Though they made not the slightest resistance, the poor creatures were ruthlessly steered down, and soon their bodies lay lifeless along the pavement.

The killing them was a mere measure of precaution, to hinder their cries from being heard by the colonists outside. A few escaped by rushing into rooms and barricading the doors. A few others also sought concealment in obscure corners, which the savages had not time to explore. None were permitted to pass outside.

While the work of slaughter was going on, a select party was otherwise occupied. It was composed of five or six savages, their gigantic chief conspicuous in the midst; the half-blood also among them.

It was they who had closed the dining-room door. Having placed sentries at it, they rushed across the court toward another door; that of a room that also opened into the corridor in one of its corners. It was the chamber which the young planter Dupre had chosen as his sleeping room; where he also kept the account-books belonging to his grand slave establishment, along with his treasure. There were deposited the kegs containing his cash—fifty thousand dollars in silver.

At the head of the party approaching it was Fernand. Something in his hand could be seen glancing under the light of the moon. It was a key. Soon after it was inserted into its lock. The door flew open, and the half-blood entered, closely followed by the others. All went in with an eagerness telling that they knew of the treasure inside.

After a short while they came out again, each bearing in his arms a little barrel, of weight almost sufficient to test his strength.

Laying these down, they re-entered the room, and soon returned similarly loaded. And again they went inside and brought forth other barrels, until nearly twenty were exposed upon the pavement.

By this the slaughter of the servants had ceased, and the savages who had been so engaged were left free to join the party occupied with the removal of the specie. At

the same time, the sentries left to guard the two doors were called away, and the whole band became clustered around the barrels like vultures around a carcass.

Some words were spoken in undertone. Then each, laying hold of a keg—there was one each for all—lifted it from the ground and carried it off out of the courtyard.

Silently, and in single file, they passed across the outside inclosure, on into the garden, and out through the gap by which they had gone in.

Near by stood their horses, tied to trees, and well concealed within shadow. They were still under saddle, with the bridles on.

It took but little time to "unhitch" them from the twigs to which they were attached. Each man did this for his own. Then each mounted, after balancing the ponderous little barrel upon the saddle-croup, and then making it fast with his lasso.

When all were on horseback they moved silently but rapidly away; the half-blood going with them.

He, too, had now a horse, the best in the troop; stolen from the stable of his betrayed master.

CHAPTER LXI.

SHOTS FOR SUCCESS.

MEANWHILE, the struggle going on inside the room was like that of tigers newly encaged. If not so tragical as the scene outside, it was equally earnest and agonizing.

It continued through all the time the red robbers were engaged in seizing upon the silver, and for some minutes after. Then the wilder excitement began to subside; the throes of angry passion giving place to feelings that bordered on despair. For their apprehensions remained with all their keen agency.

If the reaction produced despairing thoughts, it also brought calmer reflections. First among these was the wonder why the savages had made no attempt to destroy them, and were contented with simply shutting them up?

They wondered, also, at not having heard shots, and only shouts which they could tell came from the colored servants. The voice of the Ethiopian—negro or mulatto—is easily distinguished from that of his white masters. Not a cry of Indian intonation had reached their ears; no yell; nothing that resembled a war-whoop of Comanches.

What could this mean—unusual in an Indian attack, a thing never before heard of? Who could explain the strange behavior of the assailants?

One suggested that the whole affair might be a travesty—a freak of some of the younger and more foolish of the colonist fraternity. Unlikely as this was, the idea was for a moment entertained—hope, like the drowning man, catching at a straw.

Only for a moment. The affair was too serious, affecting persons of too much importance. No one would dare attempt portance. No one would dare attempt such a practical joke upon the stern old soldier Armstrong, or the proud young planter Dupre. They were not to be so trifled with.

Besides, there had been the shrieks of the colored domestics; distinctly heard, and in tones betokening terror as well as anguish. There had been groans mingled with them. These could not have come from a mere fright, got up by a mad frolic of merry-making.

If this it should be over, and the door would have been opened. Silence reigned outside, and still it was shut and locked. This would not be the way to terminate a travesty.

No; the revelry could not be of this kind; and they who thought of it gave up the idea almost as soon as it was suggested.

If the silence hitherto observed by the savages themselves had mystified the men inside the room, that succeeding was equally mysterious. There was now nor shout nor shriek, groan nor moan, not so much as a murmur!

The profound stillness was soon more than mysterious; it became positively oppressive.

What had occurred outside? What been done? Had the domestics been all killed—massacred, as it were, in a moment? And had their fellow-colonists shared the same fate?

These were the questions mutually exchanged, quickly, and with quivering lips. No one made attempt to answer them, even to himself.

All were alike, under a spell of mystified apprehension; some enfeebled by it; others speechless from the impatient, passionate anger still struggling within their breasts.

To the nine men shut up within the refectory of the old San Saba Mission-house—there were nine of them in all—it was a sad, irksome hour—perhaps the saddest and most irksome any of them had ever experienced.

To Armstrong, Dupre, and the others who had relatives, dear ones, exposed outside, it was agony indescribable, almost unendurable. The prisoners of Cawnpore, or the famed Black Hole of Calcutta, could not have suffered greater.

A moment of it was enough to drive them mad; and no doubt, continued, it would have done so.

They did not bear it in silence; or only for a short time. Dire passion again got the better of them; and they gave way to cries and angry ejaculations, uttered without any definite aim or purpose.

A thought, however, promising practical results, occurred to the hunter, Hawkins. In the midst of the second scene of excitement he sprang upon the sill of a window; and, with jaws pressed close against the iron bars, his lips protruded beyond them, he set up a series of shouts—calling for help. He continued the cries regardless of the danger of being shot or speared by the savages, still supposed to be outside. It was done in the hope of being heard by the colonists residing in the rancheria. After all but a faint one. The hour was late; the people, fatigued by the toils of the day, plowing and cotton-planting, would be all abed; perhaps also asleep.

Even if awake, there was no great likelihood of their hearing him. The adobe huts were far off—nearly half a mile; and on the opposite side to that overlooked by the refectory windows.

Besides, a grove of timber intervened; heavy timber, the trees standing close, with their branches interlocking, and loaded with thick foliage. It was a vegetable curtain, through which sound could not possibly penetrate, any more than through the casemate of a fortress or the massive walls of a penitentiary prison.

And, in addition, there was the *fracas* of the forest; the skirr of tree-crickets, the

hooting of owls, the rustling of foliage; at the time stirred by a stiff breeze. There was all this to discourage Hawkins and his fellow-prisoners. The others more than him; for the hunter had a knowledge not shared by them. He knew that Cris Tucker would not be asleep, unless it was the sleep of death. If his comrade still lived, there was a hope of his hearing him.

Relying on it, he continued his cries for help, interlarding them with exclamations that in a strictly Puritanical country would be called curses.

CHAPTER LXII.

IN SEARCH OF A COMRADE.

ON PARTING from his comrade, Cris Tucker, Hawkins had left the latter in a tent which the two hunters inhabited, there being no house-room for them among the walled dwellings. This tent they had pitched on the edge of the grove between the Mission building and the collection of adobe huts, at about a like distance from each.

The old hunter, at leaving his younger associate behind, had promised soon to be back. There was a matter of supper about to be brought on, consisting of a fine turkey they had shot that day, and Cris was engaged in roasting it over a fire kindled beside their little shilling of canvas.

As Hawkins left, the bird was almost ready to be removed from the spit, hence his promise of a speedy return.

Of course, Tucker knew the errand that was taking him to the "big house," as the Mission building had come to be called by the colonists.

The turkey, a fat young "gobbler," running grease out of every pore, and causing the fire to blaze up around it, was soon after "done brown." Perceiving this, Tucker carried the bird inside the tent and dished it upon the table, the dish being a platter of split cottonwood, rudely whittled into shape. The table itself was only a tree stump, smoothed horizontally at the top. Over it the tent had been erected.

For a time the turkey lay smoking, its cook having taken a seat beside it, to wait for the coming back of his comrade.

At first the position was pleasant enough. The savory odor that pervaded the tent gave promise of an enjoyable supper, soon to be eaten. It was keenly appetizing, though Cris Tucker's appetite did not need this. It was well whetted without; for neither he nor Hawkins had eaten any thing since making their midday meal on the upper plain, where they saw the Indian rising past. The scarce that sight had given them, coupled with their haste to get home, hindered them from since touching food; and they had not reached their tent and made so much progress in preparing supper, when Hawkins started off for the big house. The report he had to deliver was too important to brook longer delay.

As time passed and he did not return, Tucker's position, at first pleasant, soon became unendurable. The turkey was coming cold. They saw the Indian riding past. The scarce that sight had given them, coupled with their haste to get home, hindered them from since touching food; and they had not reached their tent and made so much progress in preparing supper, when Hawkins started off for the big house. The report he had to deliver was too important to brook longer delay.

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them some forms whose drapery told them to be women. They were of black, brown, or yellow complexion. And on all, either around the throat, or on the forehead, or on the breast, there was a hue of crimson that resembled blood.

It was blood, fast coagulating under the cold moonlight. It was already darkened, almost to the color of ink.

The hunter turned faint, almost sick, as he stood contemplating the hecatomb of corpses. It was a spectacle far more fearful than any ever witnessed upon a battle-field. There men lie in death, from wounds given and received under the grand, though delusive, idea of glory. These Cris Tucker saw must have come from the red hand of the assassin!

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 97.)

The Red Mazeppa:

OR,
THE MADMAN OF THE PLAINS.
A STRANGE STORY OF THE TEXAN FRONTIER!

[THE RIGHT OF DRAMATIZATION RESERVED.]

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "OVERLAND KID," "WOLF DEMON," "ACE OF SPADES," "WITCHES OF NEW YORK," ETC.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A PAIR OF KNAVES.

A HORSEMAN riding rapidly toward the hacienda of Bandera by the red light of the dying sun; the time, the afternoon of the following day to the one in which the interview between the wily adventurer and stolid half-breed had taken place.

The horseman was Lope, the Panther. The expression upon the face of the adventurer was not a pleasant one; his lips were shut firmly together, and a stern and troubled glare shot from his dark eyes.

The foam gathered about his animal's muzzle, and the heaving flanks told that the rider had spared neither whip nor spur.

"Push on, you brute!" muttered the adventurer, urging on the horse with hand and heel; "night will catch us before we reach the hacienda of our dear friend, Señor Ponce de Bandera," and the Mexican laughed bitterly.

"By the Virgin I believe that this dog of a devil will get the best of the struggle, after all. Santa Maria! I'll make a gallant fight for it, though. Has gone sodden my brain, or have my wits gone wool-gathering since I have ridden northward to the frontier? I am not used to being beaten and baffled at every turn. One point of the game alone have I gained—the papers: they are mine, but of little use unless I find the heir. This brainless idiot of a herdsman to refuse the golden fortune which my hand offered him; bah! some men are born without brains."

Onward galloped the Mexican; swiftly, bitter thoughts swept across his brain.

The sun sunk lower and lower; the far western horizon hid half its beams, and the new moon, the vestal orb, rose slowly in the heavens.

"You dull-paced brute, brother to a snail, will you never get me there?" and the adventurer gored the sides of the poor beast with his cruel spurs.

The horse was exerting himself to its utmost already, and neither the fierce words of his rider nor the forcible language of the spur-points caused him to increase his pace a single jot.

Soon, above the line of the flat prairie, rose the dark walls of Bandera, frowning on the gentle river and the still prairie like some grim fortalice of the far-off olden time.

The adventurer gave a hoarse shout of joy as he beheld the home of the man whom he sought—that home which he was striving to wrest from the grasp of its owner.

"At last!" he cried, a grim smile on his dark face. "Good! I am all impatience for the interview. A bold game I play. Bandera will be slightly astonished at my sudden and unexpected reappearance. I mean. So much the better. Perhaps I may catch him off his guard? I fancy that this will be our last interview; something within whispers me to that effect. If I do not succeed in breaking down his guard and reaching his heart with this attack, I'll even give up and seek for fortune elsewhere."

A half-hour's ride more and Lope drew rein before the gate of the hacienda.

Before he could dismount, a dozen or more of herdsman rushed from the gate and surrounded him.

The first thought of the adventurer was that the servants had been instigated by their master to attack him; but, on a second glance, he saw nothing but good-will written in the faces of those who surrounded him.

"Dismount, señor!" cried one of the herdsman, seizing the bridle of the horse.

"Hold his stirrup, José!" cried a second.

"Lean upon my shoulder, señor!" exclaimed a third, proffering his assistance.

"What the devil does all this mean?" questioned Lope, of himself, in utter astonishment.

"Pray dismount, señor," said the herdsman who seemed to hold command over the others, noticing the hesitation of the rider; "our master is at home and waiting to receive you."

"Oh, it's very evident that there is some mistake here," Lope said, to himself.

"Our master was very careful to instruct us to receive you with all attention," the herdsman added.

"Indeed?"

"Oh, yes, señor!" cried the herdsman, in chorus.

"If Bandera's temper is like mine he'll break some of these fellows' heads for this mistake," Lope muttered, laughing in his sleeve at the blunder.

"This way, señor!" cried the chief herdsman, marshaling the way into the hacienda.

"I follow you, friend," said Lope, with graceful dignity.

The herdsman got within the arch, then

paused suddenly, turned and addressed the adventurer who was close at his heels.

"The señor will pardon the question," he said, abruptly; "but, will the señor remain at the hacienda to-night?"

Lope looked astonished at the question.

"No, I do not think that I shall remain," he replied, after a moment's pause.

"The señor will depart, then?"

"Yes."

"That will be after nightfall?"

"Yes," Lope was puzzled to understand the drift of the questions.

"That is bad."

"Bad?" exclaimed the adventurer, in astonishment.

"Yes, because it is dangerous."

"I do not understand you," Lope said, and the thought flashed across his mind that he really stood in more danger within Bandera's hacienda than in any other spot in the known world.

"Do you see that sky?" and the herdsman pointed to the sky as he asked the question.

"Well?" he said, perplexed.

"Don't you see it?" asked the herdsman, in astonishment.

"No, I don't see anything but the sky."

"Not the moon?"

"Yes, of course I see the moon," Lope replied, considerably astonished; "but what of it?"

"The señor must be a stranger to this part of the country?" the herdsman said.

"I am, but I freely confess that I do not see that yonder moon which shines here is any different from the moon I have seen elsewhere," Lope observed, beginning to believe that he was dealing with a number of idiots, for he had noticed the herdsman had been exchanging glances of wonder.

"Then you don't know any thing about this moon?" the herdsman said.

"How the devil should I know any thing about the moon?" Lope cried, impatiently.

"I am not a star-gazer, and this moon looks to me exactly like every other moon of the same shape and size that I have seen elsewhere."

"Why, it's the same moon, of course," the herdsman said, slowly.

"Then, why call my attention to it?"

"Because, it is the Mexican Moon," said the herdsman, in a tone of awe.

"Shining over Mexico it naturally becomes the Mexican Moon," the adventurer replied, tranquilly.

"Yes, but it is only the Mexican Moon this month."

"What is it any other month?"

"Why, nothing but a common moon then."

Lope laughed at the conceit.

"So this month it is the Mexican Moon, and the Mexican moon is different from the common moon?"

"Will you have the kindness to explain the difference, and also why it is termed the Mexican Moon?" Lope asked, his curiosity excited.

"Because it is the dangerous moon."

"Dangerous?" cried the adventurer, in wonder.

"Yes, for when this moon rises the Indians mount their mustangs and ride upon the war-path against the frontier settlements."

"Oh, I understand now!" Lope exclaimed.

"If I leave the hacienda after dark, I am liable to fall in with some of these red warriors, for this is the frontier."

"Yes, that is it," the herdsman replied.

"There is great danger, for, within the last twenty-four hours, the Comanches, decked in their war-paint, have been seen on the prairie within thirty miles of us here."

"Thanks for your warning," Lope said, gratefully. "I shall be prepared."

"Yes, señor."

And conducted by the herdsman, the adventurer entered the house.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

THE adventurer inwardly laughed as he was conducted in state through the hacienda.

"Voto-a-brios!" he muttered to himself; "this is the richest joke that I have ever heard of. What will Bandera say when he discovers who his visitor is?"

The little procession reached the door of the grand chamber of the hacienda.

The herdsman threw open the door widely, and, with a profound bow, announced:

"Señor Don Lope, the Panther!"

The adventurer started in amazement; the sound of his name alarmed him.

He had thought his ceremonious reception a mistake—that he had been taken for another—but now it was evident that it was for him that the herdsman had waited.

That he had been led into a trap was his first thought. He glanced around him, but saw only smiling faces.

Within the apartment, by the center-table, sat Bandera, the usual cold and calm look upon his iron features.

"What the devil does all this mean?" questioned the adventurer, between his teeth.

"Enter, señor," said Bandera, with courtesy politeness, noticing the hesitation of the Panther.

With a look of confidence upon his face, the thoughts running through his brain belied, Lope entered the room.

The herdsman discreetly remained upon the threshold.

"Bring us candles, Pedro, and then withdraw," Bandera said.

"I have waited long for you, señor," the master of the hacienda observed, a peculiar look upon his stern face.

"Waited for me?" the adventurer questioned, in some little surprise.

"Yes, I felt sure that you would come to-day."

"Now, how the deuce did he guess that?" Lope muttered, to himself, in wonder.

Pedro entered with lighted candles, placed them upon the center-table and then left the room.

"You expected me?" the adventurer said.

"Oh, yes; my servants have been in waiting for you at the gate since early dawn."

The adventurer could not understand it; he cast a rapid glance around him, but saw no sign of danger.

"Begone!" exclaimed Bandera, sternly.

The door was flung violently open and a herdsman, white with terror, rushed into the room.

"Oh, señor, they come!" he gasped, in broken accents.

"Who?" questioned the master of the hacienda, in surprise.

"The red devils—the Comanches!"

only knew of your coming, but I also know what you come to say."

Lope looked at Bandera for a moment in astonishment.

"Do you doubt the truth of my words?" Bandera said. "I will give you proof then. You think that you have discovered one of the lost children of my brother Juan—one of the heirs to this estate of Bandera—and you have come to me to bargain for silence on your part. Am I not right?"

Lope was thoroughly astonished, and his keen wits instantly guessed that, if Bandera knew of his discovery of the heir, he also knew of his failure to use that heir as his tool.

"Señor, you are right," he said, gracefully; he felt that he was beaten, but determined not to allow Bandera to enjoy a triumph.

"I know, also, that the heir does not care to claim his estate, and refused to make any bargain with you."

Then, suddenly, into the mind of the adventurer flashed the thought of the little Mexican, Diego, the keeper of the wine-shop. He knew now where Bandera had procured his information.

"You have come to attempt to frighten me into buying you from making use of your knowledge?" Bandera continued. "I suppose that you already see that your plan is a failure?"

"You are quite right, señor," Lope replied, with perfect composure. "I confess that in this matter you have beaten me."

"And in this matter alone?" Bandera questioned, shrewdly.

A shade of annoyance passed across the face of the Panther.

"Have you not been also defeated in your quest for the other heir, the girl?" said Bandera, finding that Lope did not reply.

"You are always so correct that it would be folly for me to attempt to dispute your words," the Panther replied, sweetly, thus attempting to hide the vexation which he felt.

"Shall I tell you what you have been doing this morning?" questioned Bandera, suddenly.

"Just as you like," answered the adventurer, carelessly.

"You rode this morning to the Mission-priest, Father Philip; you questioned him regarding a certain child that you gave unto his care years ago."

"Did I?" and the adventurer smiled, with an air of perfect composure.

"Yes, you found that the child had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. Am I still correct?"

"Oh, gospel truth!" exclaimed Lope.

"In this struggle of wits between us, one point alone have you gained; the leaden casket with the precious papers which prove the right of the heirs of Bandera to their vast estate, is in your hands; but, even you, yourself, must admit that, unless you can find the heirs, the papers are of little value."

"Well, now I am sorry that you think so, for I was just going to offer to sell them to you," Lope said, carelessly.

"I do not think that I care to buy them," Bandera observed, coldly.

"Don't push a man too hard. I am at the wall; don't crush my flesh against the stones," the adventurer said, earnestly, his tone a strange contrast to his former flippant one.

"Good! now you talk sense; a man is never so wise as when he confesses that he is beaten."

"Exactly; you will buy the papers then?" Lope said, insinuatingly. "Of course, as one heir is dead, and the other is careless of the golden future that I could give to him, the papers are of no particular value to me. What will you give me for them—a hundred ounces?"

"A hundred devils!" cried Bandera, in astonishment.

"No; I don't want a hundred devils," replied the adventurer; "they are of no use whatever to me. You think that a hundred ounces is too high a price?"

"Are you mad?" questioned Bandera, in anger.

"Oh, no! Of course I shall try and get as high a price as possible."

"I simply buy them out of charity!"

"Yes, as we would throw a bone to quiet a snarling dog, eh?" questioned the adventurer.

"That is something like it," Bandera replied.

"What will you give, then?"

"A dozen gold pieces."

"A small sum for the papers which sway the destiny of a thousand broad acres," said Lope, reflectively.

"Accept or decline; it is your privilege," remarked Bandera, tersely.

"Well, then, I decline," the Panther said, quietly.

"You decline?" Bandera exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Yes."

"And why—your reason?"

"The price is altogether too low."

"Too low?" exclaimed Bandera, in contempt, echoing the words of the other.

"Yes, altogether too low for such valuable papers."

"The papers are of no value."

"Why do you wish to buy them, then?" cried the Panther, quickly.

Bandera shut his lips together, and there was an angry glare in his dark eyes.

"You are so humble—so crafty—so superior in wit to the humble individual called Lope the Panther, that he bows humbly to your judgment. You give me golden ounces out of charity—but I tell you will turn and caress the snake that bites you. The papers are of value, else you would not want them. The contest is not ended yet. So far you have the best of it, but my turn may come."

Bandera regarded the adventurer for a moment.

"You have had your word, now listen to mine," he said, sternly. "You have been received here with all honors—a jest of mine; I sometimes jest; I wished you to taste of honors and of home for once in your vagabond life. I raised you up that your fall might be the greater; and now depart. From this time forth my spies will track your steps; I will discover where you have hidden the leaden casket, and then wrest it from you, despite your efforts."

"I defy you!" cried the Panther, in rage.

"I have the papers, I will find the heir. She lives—I am sure of it!"

"Begone!" exclaimed Bandera, sternly.

The door was flung violently open and a herdsman, white with terror, rushed into the room.

"Oh, señor, they come!" he gasped, in broken accents.

"Who?" questioned the master of the hacienda, in surprise.

"The red devils—the Comanches!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE INDIAN'S OFFER.

BORN Bandera and the Panther started in surprise.

"The Comanches—where?" cried the master of the hacienda.

"Here—right at our gates—all in war-paint," answered the herdsman.

"It can not be!" Bandera exclaimed, in doubt.

"It is the truth, señor. Pedro and I were just at the gate when the red devils rode up. We closed the gate and gave the alarm."

"Did they offer to attack you?"

"No, señor; but we were too quick for them."

"What! it seems that I must remain under your roof, whether or no," the Panther said, with a smile.

"If the Indians have really surrounded us, your arm will be of service in the defense."

"Command me, señor," the adventurer said, with a graceful bow.

"I'll to the gate and see for myself. I can hardly believe that we are surrounded by them."

"Better go on the roof, señor; the moon is up, and by its light you can plainly see the red devils," suggested the herdsman.

The three proceeded at once to the roof.

As the herdsman had said, the moon was up, and by its faint light the watchers could discern groups of dark figures on the prairie, a hundred yards or more from the hacienda.

The faint light of the moon was reflected back by the steel lance-heads which glittered in the center of the masses of dark forms.

A single glance convinced Bandera that the herdsman was right; the hacienda was surrounded by the wild prairie warriors.

"They mean mischief," observed the Panther, standing by Bandera's side.

"I do not understand their strange way of acting," Bandera said, thoughtfully. "It is contrary to their custom thus to beleaguer a hacienda."

"As yet they have shown no sign that their intentions are warlike," Pedro, the herdsman, remarked.

"They do not come on a peaceful quest," Bandera said, as he noted the lance-heads shining silver in the moonlight.

Then from one of the dark groups a single warrior detached himself. Boldly he spurred his mustang right under the walls of the hacienda.

A tall and muscular warrior he was, fancifully decked in the war-paint.

He checked his horse suddenly and gazed upward at the little group assembled on the flat roof of the hacienda.

"Wah! the red chief would speak with his white brothers," the Comanche said.

"Let the chief speak," responded Bandera.

The Comanche warrior would speak with the white chief, Bandera, in his wig-wag.

"And why is that necessary?" asked Bandera. "The chief has arms in his hands; we do not talk with weapons."

With a single motion the Comanche drove his sharp lance into the prairie, the point downward; the keen-edged knife from his girdle followed the lance. Then the warrior held up both his hands to signify that he was unarmed.

"See! the warrior has no weapon; he comes like the dove, not like the eagle. Let the great chief open his doors, that the Comanche warrior may speak with him, face to face."

"Is your brave the White Mustang?" asked Bandera, of Pedro, the herdsman.

"No, señor; the White Mustang always rides a white horse; besides, he is much younger than this chief."

A little knot of herdsman with muskets in their hands were clustered together on the roof.

Bandera remained silent for a moment in thought; his eyes noted the armed men.

"I will hear what the savage has to say," he said at length. "Keep watch with your men, and at the slightest sign of treachery fire upon them."

Then Bandera addressed the chief, who sat his horse, motionless as a statue.

"I will listen to what my brother has to say."

"It is good," said the Indian, laconically.

Bandera descended to the gateway, followed by the Panther.

The Indian dismounted, fastened his mustang to the lance sticking in the ground, and stalked to the gate of the hacienda.

The gate swung upon its hinges and the chief entered. The gate was instantly closed and barred behind him, but the stolid savage apparently took no heed of the fact that he was virtually a prisoner in the hands of the whites.

"Let my red brother follow me."

Bandera led the way to the grand chamber of the hacienda; the Indian followed without a word; the adventurer and a couple of herdsman brought up the rear.

"Let my brother speak," Bandera said, as he halted in the center of the room, turned and faced the Indian.

"The White Mustang is the great chief of the Comanche nation," began the warrior.

"My brother is not the White Mustang," interrupted Bandera.

"When the white chief goes on the top of his big lodge again, let him look to the south by the river—let him rest his eyes on the warrior who rides a white mustang, and he will see the great chief of the Comanche nation."

"And my brother—how is he called?"

"Ah Ah-hu-la is a great chief," replied the savage, sententiously; "he comes alone into the lodge of the white-skin with nothing but his bare hands."

"The red warrior has nothing to fear," Bandera said.

"The red chief never knew what fear was!" exclaimed the Indian, proudly.

"Let my brother speak and tell why the Comanches come with the night, and circle the hacienda of Bandera with their lances."

"The White Mustang is the greatest chief in all the Comanche nation; a thousand warriors grasp their lances at his nod."

"I have heard of the great Comanche chief; what does he desire of his white brother?"

"The wigwag of the White Mustang is empty; he wants a squaw to keep it warm."

Bandera started, bit his lip in anger and cast a glance of fire at the Indian, but the stolid chief never heeded it.

"The white chief has a singing-bird—the fairest in all the Mexican land; let her come and sing in the lodge of the great Comanche chief and there will be peace."

"Dog of a red-skin!" cried the father, in

wrath. "Sooner would I lay my child dead before me with my own hand than give her to the embrace of a gory savage!"

The iron face of the Indian contracted as the hostile words fell upon his ears.

"Wah! it is good!" he said, slowly. "The white chief will not give his daughter to the Indian?"

A MORAL LESSON.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

With rampant front, on yon recumbent log,
Ready to leap at any undue racket,
Observe, my philosophic friend, that frog,
Taking the sun upon his emerald jacket.
He does not toil, and neither does he spin,
Yet Solomon in all his earthly glory
Was not arrayed like—don't you see him grin?
Indeed he's made me quite forget the story!

No vain ambition animates his days,
Although from natural instinct he is frisky,
Nor does he boast of his ancestral race,
Nor revel in the vanities of whiskey.

The pride of fashion's fools he never knew;
Content in his one suit of soft morocco,
He does not sweat as other people do,
Nor his expressive lips stain with tobacco.

You'd give him credit for perceptions keen,
And a good share of intellectual power,
Enough at least not to be taken in,
Or to seek shelter from a falling shower.

But stop, my philosophic friend who'd draw
Distinctive lines with all in the frog's favor;
Observe this hook, I put it near his jaw,
With a red tag fixed to it without savor.

Observe the tickled twinkle of his eye!
What pure tickle this crisis expresses!
No doubt he thinks it some new-fangled fly;
Smells slowly of it and his fortune blesses.

He fondly trusts his phenologic bumps,
Thinks his eye's right and inwardly he giggles;
Worthy a better cause with scarce a jump—
And see, how on my hook he writhes and wriggles!

And now, to put a moral to this tale—
There is no man, however blessed by nature,
That will not find his doom somewhat fall,
Whether he be a frog or fellow-creature.

Elroy Chase's "Man."

BY CAPT. CHARLES HOWARD.

"I THOUGHT our city journals were read by some people who wanted work; but it seems that they are not, for here my advertisement has headed the 'Wanted' column of the *American* these three mornings, and not a soul has appeared. Something's wrong with the people. If I were in England, my office would have been besieged by a thousand people an hour after the first paper left the press. I guess I had best discontinue the advertisement, and hunt up my man."

As the speaker finished, he replaced the long-nine between his teeth, and again his eyes fell upon the paper.

Elroy Chase was an Englishman, as his features would indicate. Reaching the Monumental City when property commanded low prices, he invested his cash in real estate, and a few years served to make him a comparatively wealthy man. But still he was not satisfied. Building after building he sold, for gold possessed wonderful beauty in his eyes, and at last, when we introduce him to the reader, but two stately structures, on Charles street—not the magnificent Charles street of to-day—remained in his hands.

Having practiced before the bar in his native country, he pursued his profession in Baltimore, where he contrived to turn a few honest pennies, but the dishonest ones he gained were legion. Once he left Baltimore and sought his fortune in the old Bay State; but after a year he returned, and people once more beheld his "shingle" on Courtlandt street.

When he advertised for a man, it was in the early days of Baltimore newspapers, and when everybody who would toil found plenty of work; therefore, it is not surprising that no applicants called at his office.

A few minutes after the lawyer's audible soliloquy, he was startled by a knock at his door.

"There's a polite ignoramus!" exclaimed the Englishman, as he bade the visitor enter.

The door slowly opened, and a genuine Yankee, sporting a faded gingham umbrella, stepped into Chase's sanctum.

"Good-mornin'," said the Aminadab-Sheek-looking individual, executing a ludicrous bow to the Englishman, who regarded him with a faint smile. "Somehow, drizzly for May, and he glanced wistfully at the huge pitcher of punch that graced the table, as he seated himself in a chair unbidden. 'I've walked all the way from Camden street, an' my umbrella couldn't prevent the mist from gettin' into my bones. Yer hairn't got any 'Saints' Rests' in this town, hey you? I looked everywhere for one. I wanted to git er bowl o' punch.'"

Elroy Chase acknowledged the hint, and invited the Yankee to help himself to the steaming liquor, an invitation which he quickly accepted.

While he regaled the inner man, the lawyer regarded him closely. He thought he detected something that proclaimed his visitor the "man" he wanted. There lurked evidences of a slyly-iniquitous life about that meek countenance, and the longer, closer Elroy Chase looked, the more he thought he could not be mistaken.

So, when the Yankee emptied the second tumbler of punch, and praised the article, Elroy begged him to be seated, remove his hat, umbrella, etc., and to make himself at home generally.

"I suppose, sir, that you seek my professional services," said Elroy Chase, for the purpose of bringing his visitor back to his visit, for under the influence of the punch, he was immortalizing the land of his birth.

"No, sir-ee," said the Yankee, quickly. "I never git into trouble. Honest man, don't need law. But, you see, as how I read in a stray paper down to the depot that you wanted a 'brave man.' That's the way it read, I b'lieve."

The lawyer's eyes flashed with triumph, and he confirmed his visitor's venture with a smiling nod.

"Wal, I calculate as how I'm yer man," continued the Yankee, who had given his name as Uriah Jones. "I've called a brave man to home. I've whipped everybody within three miles o' Jonesboro', and once I served the State in Boston."

Here he gave Chase a wink, and smiled.

"What! have you been in the penitentiary?" cried the lawyer, surveying the parson-like individual before him.

"That's what they says," was the response. "You see, a lot of us made some money, an' they put us through for it."

"Counterfeiting!" laughed the Englishman.

"That's the vulgar name fur makin' money in the woods. But let thet pass, sir. I'm strapped, save a flip my mother gave me for larnin' the Commandments, an' I won't part with thet. You want a man; I'm ther chap. I'll do any thing, I don't care what it is."

"Ain't you afraid of the penitentiary?" questioned Elroy Chase, feeling his way.

"No. I've larned how tew keep out o' them since I've been there."

That answer satisfied the Englishman.

"Yes, I want a man," he said; "a brave man, as I said in the paper, and I'll tell you what for."

He rose, locked the door, and, returning to his chair, resumed his story.

"I've a store, up-town that I can't sell, and I must have money to take up some notes that are nearly due. That store is heavily insured—in fact, for more than it is worth. Do you see?"

"Yes," drawled Uriah Jones. "Yeou want the insurance, an' yeou can't git it until the building goes to pot."

"Just so, and I propose to pay you well for doing the job."

"Wal, I've no objection, seeing as how it's an easy way of puttin' money into my wallet," responded Uriah. "Old Ben Franklin said: 'Put money into thy purse' but he didn't say how. Shouldn't wonder if he filled his wallet by burnin' stores. Do you carry the keys to the buildin'?"

"I carry one; the young clerk that sleeps in the store has the other."

"We mustn't burn him."

"Ah! but we must!" almost hissed the Englishman.

"Then yeou two are at loggerheads," ventured Uriah.

"Yes, curse him! I'll tell you how it stands. For six months I've been trying to marry a girl on Eutaw street; but my confounded clerk, who manages the store, took her right away from me, and next week he's going to marry her."

"That would rile me," said the Yankee; "an' along with the store, death will foreclose the mortgage on—what's his name's life."

"His name is Shelby Moore."

"But soon he'll be no more," pursued Uriah, helping himself to another glass of punch. "When do you want the job done?"

"To-morrow night, for the day following witnesses the expiration of my policies."

"Just so!" ejaculated the Yankee. "But thet young chap might escape if we don't chloroform 'im, an' I propose a kind o' co-operative association, for which I will not

charge so steep for my work. Let both of us go down to the store to-morrow night, an' while I chloroform Moore, you kerosene the goods."

"Agreed!" cried Chase, seizing the plan with avidity. "Now, do not fail me, Jones. If we fail, we fail together."

"Never fear for Uriah Jones," was the assuring response, while a strange twinkle danced in the speaker's eyes.

"Now I will triumph!" said the lawyer. "To-morrow night my accursed rival steps from my path, and, in time, I become the husband of Lena Monroe."

A few minutes later the conspirators separated, having agreed to meet at Chase's office the night mentioned above.

Thus was one of the darkest villainies concocted, and the fates seemed propitious for its consummation.

Elroy Chase hated his clerk and rival with all his heart. By his serpent-like manners he ingratiated himself into the favor of Mr. Monroe, who would readily have accepted him as a member of his family by marriage. But he loved his daughter too well to dictate to her in such delicate matters, and when she informed him that she preferred employee to employer, he smiled upon her choice, and looked forward, with joyful anticipation, to the wedding day.

The shades of the chosen night found Uriah Jones and the English lawyer preparing for their crime, over bowls of punch. Impatiently they awaited the arrival of midnight, and when it came they left the office.

An admittance into the store was gained by the genuine keys in Chase's possession, and, leaving the Englishman to kerosene the goods, Uriah Jones glided up the steps that led to Shelby Moore's chamber. Presently he returned, with the odor of chloroform about his person, and the lawyer applied a match to a pile of dry-goods, placed in a convenient spot for quickly destroying the building.

"Come," said Chase, clutching Uriah's arm, as the blaze crept over the fabrics.

At that moment several police sprang over the counter, and the Englishman found himself in their grasp.

The officers were followed by Shelby Moore, who extinguished the flames, and gazed triumphantly into his employer's face, revealed, in all its ghastliness, by a dark lantern.

"Traitor!" hissed Chase, throwing a fierce look into Uriah Jones' face.

The Yankee laughed.

"This is my revenge!" he cried. "Elroy Chase, do you recollect the poor woman, in Roxbury, whom you, by your undue technicality, robbed of her scanty means? Your face tells me that you have not forgotten it. I am her son—I, Seth Johnson, not Uriah Jones. Ha! ha! ha! I calculate as how you'll not get Miss Monroe after all!"

Elroy Chase cowered before the avenging son.

He offered to restore the money he had taken from the widow Johnson, in exchange for freedom.

"No!" cried the Yankee. "Money is no recompense for the heart-broken sighs you drew from my poor mother. Go to prison, villain, and there expiate your crimes."

The lawyer did go to the penitentiary, and when he came forth, he was an old man before his time; he had atoned terribly for his sins.

Satisfied with his revenge, Seth Johnson returned to Massachusetts, bearing with him a draft for a handsome sum, from Mr. Monroe. In the Bay State he lived to a ripe age, bequeathing to his posterity an untarnished name, and the story of "Elroy Chase's Man," as related above.

Recollections of the West.

The "Major's" Hollow Log.

BY RALPH RINGWOOD.

THE old "Major" was the character of Balltown, and as such was recognized. My earliest recollections are intimately associated with the old white-haired man that sat on the porch sunny days, in his great split-bottom arm-chair, and told stories of his early adventures among the Indians to those who would patiently bear the long-winded inflictions.

There was one story the old Indian-fighter told me just before his death, which, by the by, occurred while he was seated in his favorite chair, that made so lasting an impression, that now, after many years, it comes back to me as fresh as though it had been told me yesterday.

This was during the very height of the Indian war in Kentucky, which gave to that State the name of the "dark and bloody ground," that Edward Thorman settled upon what is now known as Wilson's Creek, near the present village of Bardston.

The cabin was erected upon a slight elevation near the mouth of the creek where it emptied into the Beech Fork, and com-

and swam quickly to the other side. Here he emerged, leaving a broad trail in the soft clay, and reaching the hard earth upon top of the bank, he turned and leaped back into the stream, and struck out with great swiftness for the end of the log, which lay partially in the water. This he reached before the savages appeared over the hill, and crawling into the hollow, was, for the time, at least, safely concealed.

From where he was of course nothing could be seen. He could judge of the movements of the savages only by the sounds they made, but these, together with the smell of burning timbers that soon filled the air, told him that his cabin had been fired.

He also heard several of the Indians leap into the water and swim across to where he had emerged, and from the rapidly receding yells uttered by these, he knew that his *ruin* had succeeded, and that they were searching for him in the dense timber of the bottom-land.

For more than an hour he lay listening to the whoops of the Indians that were dancing about his burning cabin, and presently he became aware that they must have gotten hold of a small keg of spirits he had cached near by, and were fast getting under the influence of the stimulating draught.

He was not long in doubt in regard to this matter; the savages, as the fiery liquor mounted into their brains, became, as they always do, perfect demons, and went howling and screeching back and forth between the burning dwelling and the creek, in whose cool waters they frequently came down to slake their thirst.

Thorman now became satisfied that his chances for escape were good. If the Indians would only keep up their drink until nightfall, he was certain of getting clear.

In the meanwhile the others had come back from a fruitless search in the timber, and having reported, instant search of the immediate neighborhood was instituted.

Here the liquor again stood his friend. Those who had just come in were jealous of the quantity the others were drinking, getting more than their share, and pitched into it with extraordinary ardor.

These, too, soon became drunk, and then arose such a perfect pandemonium of sound,

Not only about it, but on it, and over it, as thick as bees in a swarm.

Thorman had not long to wait for the *dénouement*, but still the time seemed interminable.

More brush had been piled on, and the log itself was now fairly ablaze; the end could not be far off.

Seemingly just at the proper moment, that is when the savages were huddled close up in front, and scrambling for places on top of the log, a bright, glaring flash suddenly shot up on high, a dense volume of white smoke accompanying, instantly followed by a deafening crash that shook the very hills around.

The mine had exploded, scattering death and horrible wounds on every hand.

Before the echoes had ceased, the yells of the dismayed savages filled the air, while the shrieks of scorched and maimed wretches lent additional volume to the sounds.

The destruction was terrible. The powder, confined within the narrow crevice, had exploded with the violence of a great bomb-shell, the huge splinters of seasoned wood acting as would have done the pieces of iron, or the balls and slugs with which these implements of death are charged.

Utterly demoralized by the unlooked-for occurrence, and at once attributing it to the agency of some evil spirit, those of the Indians that could do so, broke and fled in the wildest terror. The canoe was instantly launched, and actually without even looking behind, much less pausing to succor the wounded and dying, the warriors seized their paddles and shot off down the stream with the rapidity of a race-horse.

After witnessing the catastrophe, Thorman set out for the post on the Rolling Fork, and on the fourth day he, with a number of others, returned to the scene.

The bodies of eight savages lay just as they had fallen, giving evidence that the survivors had not returned. They were buried in a common grave, and before two days had elapsed, Thorman, with the assistance of his friends, had erected the framework of another cabin, into which he soon moved.

The rebuilding of the cabin on the same spot was done with the advice of his friends, who asserted that no Indian would ever attack, or even approach the place again, and so it really proved, and Thorman lived there for many years, never once being molested as long as he was in the cabin, or about it.

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ELROY CHASE'S "MAN."

that the concealed settler was fain to stop both ears with his hand.

The day passed, and still the Indians loitered about the spot, and at length evening and then night approached.

From the sounds of preparation, Thorman soon became convinced that the Shawnees were going to encamp in his "front yard," as he termed the clearing, for the night.

This was unlooked for, and, indeed, unusual on the part of the red-skins, but they were probably rendered careless by the whisky, and didn't properly reckon the danger.

But that which Thorman looked upon, at first, as only an inconvenience, he soon found was a real danger.

As the day passed, the charred logs of the cabin had either went entirely out, or else smoldered without giving off any heat, and as the cold grew more and more intense, the savages began looking for the most comfortable quarters.

Their eyes at once fell upon the hollow log, and before Thorman had fairly realized the fact, they had a large fire crackling and roaring against its side.

Here was a quandary. If he remained he would assuredly catch the benefit of two or three pounds of fine powder, exploding in those close quarters; and if he crawled forth while it was yet twilight, the Indians would be almost certain to discover and tomahawk him.

But he was not allowed much time for reflection.

He could feel the heat through the thin shell, where he lay, and he knew that just beyond where he lay was the powder at a place equally thin. The latter he could not reach. It had been put in from the upper end of the log, and almost midway its length the hollow narrowed down so small as to prevent his crawling entirely through.

As I have said, the log lay slanting on the bank, the lower end being half submerged in the water, which was very deep at this point.

As the heat grew more and more intense, and the noise without grew less as the Indians became sleepy around and upon the log, by reason of the warmth and whisky, Thorman prepared for the desperate venture.

Backing slowly and silently until his feet touched the water, he paused and listened.

There was no change in the manner or talk of the savages, and feeling that so far he was undetected, he dropped down into the stream, and clinging to the edge of the log, listened again.

Nothing as yet to cause unusual alarm, and letting go his hold, he floated down into the current into the darkness beyond the line of light.

Fifty yards below he struck out for the bank, climbing which, he retraced his steps a little way, got good cover in the undergrowth, and looked back to where the savages were clustering about the log.

Short Stories from History.

How a Savage Can Die.—That all the virtue of true heroism does not rest with civilized nations we have ample proof in the conduct of the American Indian, when under pain or torture. This instance, related by M. Bossu, a French officer of distinction, who held a command in New Orleans, when Louisiana Territory was a French possession, offers a most fearful contrast between the white captor and the red captive:

"The tragical death of an Indian of the Collapissa nation," says M. Bossu, "who sacrificed himself for his country and son, I have often admired as displaying the greatest heroism, and placing human nature in the noblest point of view. A Choctaw Indian having one day expressed himself in the most reproachful terms of the French, and called the Collapissas their dogs and their slaves; one of this nation, exasperated at his injurious expressions, laid him dead on the spot. The Choctaws, the most numerous and the most warlike tribe on that continent, immediately flew to arms; they sent deputies to New Orleans, to demand from the French Governor the head of the savage who had fled to him for protection: the Governor offered presents as an atonement, but they were rejected with disdain; they threatened to exterminate the whole tribe of the Collapissas. To pacify this fierce nation, and prevent the effusion of blood, it was, at length, found necessary to deliver up the unhappy Indian. The Sieur Ferrand, commander of the German posts on the right of the Mississippi, was charged with this melancholy commission; a rendezvous was in consequence appointed between the settlement of the Collapissas and the German posts, where the mournful ceremony was conducted in the following manner:

"The Indian victim, whose name was Tichou Mingo (i. e. servant to the cacique or prince) was produced. He rose up, and agreeably to the custom of these people, harangued the assembly to the following purpose: 'I am a true man—that is to say, I fear not death; but I lament the fate of my wife, and four infant children, whom I leave behind in a very tender age; I lament, too, my father and my mother, whom I have long maintained by hunting; them, however, I recommend to the French, since, on their account, I now fall a sacrifice.'

"Scarce had he finished this short and pathetic harangue, when the old father, struck with the filial affection of the son, arose, and thus addressed himself to his audience: 'My son is doomed to death; but he is young and vigorous, and more capable than me to support his mother, his wife, and four infant children; it is necessary, then, that he remain upon earth to protect and provide for them; as for me, who draw toward the end of my career, I have lived long enough; may my son attain to my age, that he may bring up his tender infants; I am no longer good for anything; a few years more or less, are to me of small moment: I have lived as a man, I will die as a man. I therefore take the place of my son.'

"At these words, which expressed his paternal love and greatness of soul in the most touching manner, his wife, his son, his daughter-in-law, and the little infants, melted into tears around this brave, this generous old man; he embraced them for the last time, exhorted them to be ever faithful to the French, and to die rather than betray them by any mean treachery unworthy of his blood.

"Having thus delivered himself, he presented his head to the kinsmen of the deceased Choctaw; they accepted it; he then extended himself over the trunk of a tree, when, with a hatchet, they severed his head from his body.

"By this sacrifice all animosities were forgotten